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PROFILE  
BY  
GASLIGHT

*An Irregular Reader  
About the Private Life of  
Sherlock Holmes*

EDITED BY  
*Edgar W. Smith*

1944  
SIMON AND SCHUSTER  
*New York*



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**To Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**







*The characters in this book are real persons. Any resemblance to fictional characters, living or dead, is purely accidental.*







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## FOREWORD

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SHERLOCK HOLMES WAS BORN on the 6th of January, 1854, in the town of Mycroft in the North Riding of Yorkshire.

We can have little patience with those who are ignorant of this vital fact—who believe, in their innocence, that he sprang full-panoplied from the brow of Conan Doyle, or that his birth occurred, far from Yorkshire and as late as 1887, in the cold bed of the printed page. Such mundane fancies are unworthy of the deeper reality.

For Sherlock Holmes lived more really than most of the pretended great who claim a place in history's Valhalla. We have it on the canonical authority of Dr John H. Watson that he walked among the giants of his time and dwarfed them by his stature. His name still comes with easy familiarity and affection to the common tongue. There is no land upon the earth that has not felt his presence, no town or hamlet beyond the farthest sea without his footprints in its streets. He sits beside the hearths of all of us today. Surely this man who never wore the garments of the flesh has taken to himself the very immanence and essence of existence.

He lived and had his being, in sober truth, in that nostalgic gas-lit London of the late nineteenth century which saw the realization of a snug and peaceful world that never would be any worse and never could be any better. It was a world we would all give our hearts to capture and to know again; yet the nostalgia it raises up is not so much for the pervading charm of the age and time itself as for the age-



less, timeless man who stands before us as its brightest symbol.

This book is for those who would explore that pleasant world again, and who would seek to know the man himself a little better. It is offered in the hope that we can tramp together along the stones of Baker Street, and peer in over each other's shoulders at the windows of number 221B.

Sometimes a fog swirls thick against the panes, and a four-wheeler rumbles heavily past the door. It is difficult, then, through all the years between, to see and hear precisely what is going on within. But there is no fog so thick as to shut out the picture of the gaunt figure stretched in the chair by the fireplace, Persian slipper within easy reach and pipe aglow; there is no sound so loud as to drown the wail of the violin lulling the great mind to rest or inspiring it to more titanic effort.

A ring comes at the bell; a step is heard upon the stair. The drooping eyelids lift, and the nostrils quiver with the eager thrill of the chase.

"Come, Watson, come! The game is afoot!"

E. W. S.

Maplewood, N. J.

March 1, 1944.



## INTRODUCTION

---

WHEN I WAS A BOY, my uncle used to take me backstage at the Empire Theatre, and there I would watch William Gillette make up as Sherlock Holmes. It was in both senses "making up," for this was the world of make-believe, and the great actor was most successful in passing himself off as a favorite fictional character. That Sherlock Holmes *was* a fictional character I never doubted; he and that amiable blunderer, Dr Watson, were patently the creations of A. Conan Doyle. It was so stated in all the books.

Then, many years later, I met Edgar W. Smith, and I was not so sure. I had observed how Holmes had grown from a character in fiction to a legend; I had noticed the accumulating literature (more than 300 items) devoted to Holmes's—not Doyle's—origins, his habits, and his imitators. And here was Smith, secretary of the group calling itself The Baker Street Irregulars, calmly declaring that Sherlock Holmes was a real person. Was this Smith, otherwise a reasonable industrialist, slightly mad?

I investigated The Baker Street Irregulars, so called after the sharp-eyed, wide-eared newsboys and street Arabs who went everywhere, heard everything, and picked up oddments of information in Victorian London for their idol, Sherlock Holmes. I found that The Baker Street Irregulars not only believed that Sherlock Holmes was a man, but *is* a man—a retired elderly philosopher cultivating his garden, or, to be more exact, his bee farm in Sussex. And A. Conan Doyle? Here there was a small difference of opinion. Some of the elect conceded that Doyle was a



writer, the author of *The Adventures of Brigadier Gerard*, *The White Company*, and other unimportant historical romances. Others maintained that Doyle was not a writer at all, but a literary agent, a go-between who copied and marketed the manuscripts of the faithful but careless Dr Watson. These manuscripts were known to the Baker Street pundits as The Sacred Writings, and woe to the Holmesian scholar who questioned the canon. I began to concede that Sherlock Holmes may have lived, may even indeed have had a private life of his own.

This volume removes the last shreds of my skepticism. I recant. I have seen the light. I believe that Sherlock Holmes was born and became one of the great men of our day. In company with such authorities as Vincent Starrett, Christopher Morley, Fletcher Pratt, Rex Stout, Dorothy L. Sayers, Logan Clendening, Anthony Boucher, Alexander Woollcott, and Elmer Davis—all of whom present their testimony in the following pages—I realize that the legend has turned into a living being, incomparable and ageless.

Every reader will have his own doubts about certain details; but there is no doubt about the viability of Holmes himself. He lives, and will live longer than those of us who wear the gross but impermanent clothing of flesh. We know little concerning the origins of King Arthur and Robin Hood and Roland and Paul Bunyan—once living men, now they are legends. Sherlock Holmes is a glorious example to the contrary. He is—and this book proves it—a legend that has come to life.

LOUIS UNTERMEYER



---

SHERLOCK HOLMES  
THE LEGEND

---



## *To a Very Literary Lady*

BY VINCENT STARRETT

---

Madam, I do not care a sudden damn  
Whether 'twas Shakespeare, Bacon, or their twins  
Who wrote great 'Hamlet' for my many sins,  
Since I have heard a door in London slam  
And seen great Sherlock issue. In Siam  
The women dress in trousers, and their shins  
Grow numb, what time the cosmic platter spins,  
Waiting the latest 'Doctor Thorndyke,' ma'am.

Once as a lad I spent a slender dime  
That I could ill afford, for 'Old King Brady';  
Since then my tastes have altered little, Lady.  
Have you no interest at all in crime?  
Let us be done with all this childish prattle—  
Hark! In some victim's throat that final rattle!



## *Sherlock Holmes and the Pygmies*

BY HEYWOOD BROWN

---

THERE WAS A TIME when the detective story, particularly the murder mystery, was hardly respectable. These were tales to be read by schoolboys who hid the fearful books behind the large protecting surfaces of their geographies. And no woman of refinement twenty years ago left titles such as *The Corpse in the Cupboard* and *The Slaying in Syracuse* lying on her library table even though she might peruse the volumes in private.

Two men, working quite separately, are largely responsible for the present vogue of mystery stories in America. First came Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and created Sherlock Holmes, the finest detective of all time and probably the most widely known character in modern fiction. Later there was a war and Woodrow Wilson. During the darkest days of the conflict the President informed the newspapermen that in times of deepest stress it was his custom to find relaxation in some lively yarn of crime and its solution. It was something of a shock to the country to learn that its leader lay propped up in bed at night impatient to discover just who it was who thrust the ivory paper knife into the dead colonel's midriff. In fact America may well have been shocked to hear that a President read anything at all. But Mr Wilson before coming to the White House had been the head of Princeton and his taste was, even in the eyes of his enemies, respectable. Almost on the instant we all began to flaunt the books which once had been han-



### *Sherlock Holmes the Legend*

dled furtively. It became the stamp of careerists to seek solace from their many duties in the anodyne of swift-paced mystery melodramas.

Today the detective story has reached the stage of mass production. The druggist hands us our favorite toothpaste by reaching over some huge stack of gayly jacketed books devoted to themes both grisly and thrilling. And men intent on nothing more than cigarettes find that even the tobacconists have turned librarians in the matter of detective fiction.

Conan Doyle could hardly have contemplated any such condition when first he fashioned his gaunt hero and set him down to lodge in Baker Street. It is even doubtful whether he would have been pleased by the more recent high tides in mystery stories. Unlike Woodrow Wilson, Conan Doyle set no great store by murder mysteries. He remained to the end a saddened author and a perplexed one. He didn't want to be remembered for Sherlock Holmes. To him the creation of a master detective was little more than a good stunt. His bid for present fame and, after that, posterity, lay in his historical novels. *The White Company* was far and away his favorite. Holmes wasn't even a good second, for Doyle's own alternative choice lay in the stories he created around a Napolconic soldier called Brigadier Gerard.

The tragedy which came to Sir Arthur has afflicted other authors. He was praised for that part of his work which he himself liked least. Most authors have some pet among their own works which has lagged in public favor. The book which has represented the greatest amount of toil must of necessity seem the most worthy to the creator. He hates to feel that he wasted time on trifles. And yet, though we have all been told that genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains, a story dashed off lightly may



be, for all concerned except the author, the pick of the puppies.

Let this commentator state at the outset that he disagrees wholly with Doyle's estimate. *The Adventures of Brigadier Gerard* is a lively series and might well bear revival. I suggest it as peculiarly fitted for the movie men. But *The White Company* is pedestrian in gait. It is, if you like, worthy but not compelling. I am among those who feel that Sherlock Holmes has an excellent chance of survival. It is hard to think of an age in which his exploits will find no listeners. In saying that he stands as the best-known character created by any author in the English language in our day, I do not mean to hail him as the finest of modern literary products. Yet think a minute, please, and see if you can name any other fictional figure as famous in the world's circle. Almost he has become a part of the language.

Nor do I think of this as any light achievement. There are those inclined to minimize the great man of Baker Street and his creator. They tell us that Doyle did no more than adapt the detective stories of Edgar Allan Poe and that Sherlock Holmes is merely a shadow of Poe's Dupin. While there is a similarity in technique the advantage of the completed performance lies wholly with Conan Doyle. According to my taste, Dupin is bloodless, Holmes a completely dimensioned character.

It is a pity that Sir Arthur never had the same lively interest in *The Sign of the Four*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and the others which so fascinated the rest of the world. Possibly he could not thrill as we did because from the beginning he knew how each story would turn out. If his faith in spiritualism proves sound let it be hoped that a certain sweet forgetfulness will be one of the boons of the hereafter and that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, himself, may now sit down like any average shade and turn the pages



### *Sherlock Holmes the Legend*

restlessly to discover just which person in the story did the murder and how Holmes will finally solve it. Indeed I gravely suspect that Doyle's interest in spiritualism may have been partly conditioned by his desire to achieve contact with a world of truer, sounder and more enduring judgments than those prevailing in this life. He wanted to find a country where the White Company would be king. And, though it would be impertinent for me to speak for any other world, I gravely fear that even beyond life Sir Arthur is doomed to disappointment.

It was inevitable, of course, that he should prefer *The White Company*. Even the scantiest biographical summary may serve to show why. Sir Arthur was first a physician. And then a sort of explorer of sanitation along the coasts of Africa. He was a typical upper middle class English boy fed at his font with the *Idylls of the King* and the *Waverley* novels. To the rest of the world, and particularly to the American world, it might so happen that Sherlock Holmes was the very essence of romance. He might release the pent-up emotions of the dreary millions. He might fulfill the daydreams and nightdreams of the great unnumbered crowd. In fact he did. But to the spoon-fed subconscious of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle he simply wasn't good enough. He was of course a brilliant creature. He was destined to make a literature, color a theater, tinge the speech of two peoples. But he didn't have plumes in his hat. He wasn't in love with a daughter of high degree, a lady to be won only by preposterous gallantry. It is not, perhaps, going too far afield to do a little rough and ready psychoanalysis on Sir Arthur, and say that to an expert eye his avowed sympathy with a pitifully outnumbered "white company" not merely grew out of something in his youth of which available personal history gives us only a hint, but that it foreshadowed his willingness to accept odds as long as those against communication after death. Since an explanation



## *Sherlock Holmes and the Pygmies*

of Sir Arthur is any man's guess, might one not almost venture this: that he was a gambler under wraps, seeing always the possibility of the long shot, being always a priest of unlikelihood, writing his own best-loved book about a cause in which only the fictioneer could triumph, ending his life as a votary of the least proved or provable of modern concepts and easing his tensions by creating a being to whom virtually nothing was unknown?

It is even possible that Sir Arthur disliked Sherlock because he was a sort of over-blessed echo of the greater and graver heroes of his own heart. Things came too easily to the sage of Baker Street. There were times when Professor Moriarty pressed him close but for the most part the triumphs of Holmes were cerebral. How can such things be romantic to a doctor even though he be a country one?

There is none so benighted probably in all this wide world but that in his time he has worn the helmet of Navarre. The very man who would swear you down that he has forgotten all that trash long since will find himself pulsing just a little more quickly when the movie hero bobs up waving the half-forgotten glory. Some dreams are better than others, and most of them are much worse. The dreamer is an ass, if you please, but he knows what he likes. Sometime in the youth of Arthur Conan Doyle, he had his own particular vision of prowess. He might have been seven years old, he might have been twelve, but he likelier was five. It was the superb old vision of man against the sky, one against the gods. He never got away from it, any more than any of the rest of us get away from ours. He took himself with his boluses, his sanitation schemes, his healing impulses, to the grimy African coasts. When the actualities of his own life would not permit even a vestige of the dream to come true, he took to writing as is the way of writing men.

When his great liberator, his Sherlock Holmes, was an



### *Sherlock Holmes the Legend*

accomplishment, he could not brook him because the sign by which he conquered was not great enough. Whatever Mr Holmes might do for other men, he could do nothing for Sir Arthur. There was no solace in him—he had no shining armor.

So the anomaly of Conan Doyle's preferring himself as a third- or fourth-rate Walter Scott with just a dash of Hall Caine thrown in, when he might so easily have been happy with his incomparable Sherlock Holmes, is not such a poser after all. It takes a very sagacious man, one vastly more intellectualized and vastly less emotionalized than Conan Doyle, to know that what he called his great work is no more than the tardy form and substance of his adolescent wistfulness. The product of his maturity, however close kin it may be to that first bright image, will seem to him less than the best he can do. Imagine the Kipling of *Soldiers Three* being merely on his way to *If*.

But though Doyle regarded Holmes as the creation of a lighter moment, even an interlude in the life of this serious-minded author was not so very light. Sir Arthur had not a very lively sense of humor. This may be a defect in many authors but it becomes a virtue in a writer of detective stories. When in pursuit of a murderer there is not time for chuckling. Laughter will spoil the tug and tension of any mystery. I am aware of the fact that many authors of detective melodramas have introduced comic relief. The hugely successful play *The Bat* was a succession of groans and guffaws. Personally the farce might have been omitted without spoiling my enjoyment, but in any case the true detective story fan when alone with a book wants no relief of any kind. He is impatient of distractions. To me the introduction of humor is a great defect in the well-liked Van Dine stories. Unquestionably these are skillfully plotted and ingeniously contrived but I am alienated by the light chatter of Philo Vance. If an author cannot take



## *Sherlock Holmes and the Pygmies*

his own mystery with complete seriousness how can he expect the reader to do so? And a detective story is serious or nothing.

I will admit the existence of one brilliant exception within the field of tales which I have encountered. A. A. Milne contrived to break the cardinal rule and still succeed. *The Red House Mystery* manages to be light-hearted and also absorbing. But it is a dangerous formula. Few have succeeded in utilizing it. I wish that an even smaller number would try.

Writers with greater present claim to the literary peerage than Conan Doyle have had their fling at the detective story or its first cousin, the tale of horror. Stevenson did both. *The Suicide Club* is essentially a detective yarn even though the author tries to pretend that it is mere burlesque and the spirit is one of mockery. As for horror there is one particular short story about a Spanish peasant girl and her wolf-like mother which gives me such fearful creeps that I defend myself by invariably forgetting the title as a sort of self-protection. Nor will I look it up for you. It is a story to murder sleep.

And Henry James, although his fame lies along quite other channels, penned one thriller which still lives on to frighten folk. In fact I know some few readers who maintain that his *Turn of the Screw* remains for them the most fertile gooseflesh instigator of them all. His most telling effects are built around one particular device which has played upon the horrid fancies of everybody. The moments of tension come when a sinister face peers through a window. For reasons unknown to me most of us fear the danger which stands without and a little removed far more than any which is at our elbow. Even in childhood we have a panicky sensation about being spied upon from the street or garden.

Bernard Shaw, to the best of my knowledge, has made



## *Sherlock Holmes the Legend*

no direct contributions to the field of detective or horror stories but he has done his bit to help make respectable this type of fiction. He once wrote that if he were in charge of a public library he would keep upon the shelves only books about knaves, rogues and criminals. His explanation was a restatement of the Freudian theory that literature is an escape from the life in which we live. The man who reads about a murderer may in his fantasy become that criminal and share his thrills and horrors. That, says Mr Shaw, drains off his savage impulses and leaves him a respectable husband and taxpayer in actual life.

No modern mystery writer known to me has succeeded in shaking off the influence of Holmes and Conan Doyle. Each of the popular detectives has assumed some of his attributes. Even when great pains are taken to avoid any resemblance to Sherlock Holmes the reader realizes that here too is still one more frightened effort to avoid the best and most famous formula. It is best to acknowledge the debt and then go on.

Since the time of Doyle (or Poe if you like) it has been customary to have the solution achieved by somebody outside the Police Department. This is the most strict of all detective rules. The regular force must bungle. Of late, I have been informed, one author has taken a regularly uniformed inspector as the hero. This is rank heresy and I trust that it will not prevail. One by-law which has been developed in later-day detective fiction is the scattering of suspicion. Sir Arthur would on occasion point an accusing finger at an innocent person but he never carried this device to the ridiculous lengths known recently. Readers have grown wise and long ago they learned that the first persons suspected could not possibly be guilty without spoiling the story. They began to search for the least likely character instead of the seeming culprit. Wild indeed have been the efforts made to fool the sophisticated mystery fan. The



## *Sherlock Holmes and the Pygmies*

most outlandish within my knowledge is a novel in which the narrator is revealed at the end as the murderer. Although this is going a bit too far there are excellent elements in the story in question but naturally neither rack nor thumbscrews will induce me to identify it in my list as the tale I have here described. Mature persons who go about on Christmas Eve informing small children that there is no Santa Claus are more sweetly scented than the miscreants who insist on telling you the solution of the mystery story you are just about to read.

Accordingly, there is another story which shall be nameless even though it served to deceive many by a sort of doubling-back ingenuity. In this tale a murder was committed in a library which is conventional enough. A shot rang out and bystanders rushed into the room and found a man standing by the colonel's body with a smoking revolver in his hand. Just before the shot harsh words were heard. The man with the revolver had a motive. Everything pointed to his guilt. The wise reader dismissed this character from suspicion immediately. This was the first chapter. He could not have done the horrid deed. But after thirty-three more chapters the author calmly admitted that the man against whom all the weight of evidence lay was actually the murderer. But this again is a formula which will serve but once.

It seems to me that English authors lead Americans in the production of good detective stories. Among our own writers S. S. Van Dine, Earl Derr Biggers and Mary Roberts Rinehart come to mind. The English have given us within recent years a list far too numerous to mention here. But towering above the lot there stands the angular figure of Sherlock Holmes. He belongs, I believe, to the ages.



## *The Profile Emerges\**

BY HOWARD HAYCRAFT

---

### I

PICTURE A WINTER'S MORNING in Edinburgh sixty years ago. It is dark and bitterly cold. The crowded lecture theater of the Royal Infirmary is lit murkily by flickering lamps. There is a pungent odor of chemicals in the chill air.

Through the thick gloom rasps the crisp, nasal voice of the lecturer on the rostrum. He is Joseph Bell, consulting surgeon of the Infirmary and idol of the students, though they fear his caustic tongue. His powers of observation and analysis are the wonder of pupils and fellow-medicos alike. In five minutes' time, it is said, he can deduce the occupation and past history of any person brought before him.

Beside him this morning stands a clinic patient, whose case is to be diagnosed. Bell calls one of the students to the platform.

"What is the matter with this man, sir?" he barks at the trembling undergraduate. "No! You mustn't touch him. Use your eyes, sir! Use your ears, your brain, your bump of perception, your powers of deduction."

The unhappy tyro makes a wild guess. "H-hip-joint disease, sir," he stammers weakly.

"Hip-nothing!" Bell snorts. "The man's limp is not from

\* Condensed from a chapter in *Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of the Detective Story*.



## *The Profile Emerges*

his hip, but from his feet. Were you to observe *closely* you would see that there are slits, cut by a knife, in those parts of the shoes where the pressure is greatest against the foot. The man is a sufferer from corns and has no hip trouble at all.

"But he has not come here to be treated for corns, gentlemen," Bell continues. "His trouble is of a much more serious nature. This is a case of chronic alcoholism. The rubicund nose, the puffed, bloated face, the bloodshot eyes, the tremulous hands and twitching face muscles, the quick, pulsating arteries—all show this.

"My diagnosis," he concludes dryly, "is confirmed by the neck of a whisky bottle protruding from the patient's right-hand coat pocket.

"Never, gentlemen, neglect to ratify your deductions."

Verily, the words are the words of Dr Bell. But the voice, gentlemen, is that of Sherlock Holmes.

## II

Arthur Conan Doyle—known throughout the civilized world as the creator of Sherlock Holmes—was born in Edinburgh on May 22, 1859, of mixed Anglo-Irish blood. His family traced its descent on both sides from distinguished ancestry, but in circumstances it was anything but affluent. Nevertheless, the boy received a good education, though not without great struggle and sacrifice: first in a series of Jesuit schools in Great Britain and on the Continent and later at the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh, where he came under Joseph Bell's influence. The keen intellect of the older man quickly recognized kindred qualities in the younger, and a helpful appointment of Doyle as Bell's out-patient clerk followed. Despite this assistance, Doyle was forced from time to time to leave classes behind for a term to work as helper to some parish saw-bones for the funds to continue his studies. But the bull-



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dog determination which characterized his whole life enabled him to finish his medical course only slightly behind his regular class.

The story of Doyle's almost accidental creation of Sherlock Holmes has been told so frequently and so well that a brief recounting here will suffice.

In 1882 the young practitioner hung out his red lamp in Southsea, a suburb of the southern seacoast city of Portsmouth, and in 1885 he married. He had chosen the Southsea location with high expectations. An anecdote told many years later in his autobiography reveals what he actually found. After he had been in practice some time he received a letter from the tax authorities informing him that his income report for the previous year had been found "most unsatisfactory." The debt-ridden young doctor with a sick wife scrawled two bitter words across the face of the communication and posted it back. The words were: "I agree."

But the faulty judgment that took Doyle to Portsmouth ranks high in the list of literature's disguised blessings. Not many months at Bush Villa, Southsea, were needed to tell the mustached, pugnacious, young physician the nature of his plight. With virtually unlimited time to sit, puff his cheap shag, and ponder in his waiting-room, barren of furnishings and patients alike, he had begun to send out short stories to the magazines. A modest success in this direction only served to show that his time was wasted—that if any really substantial return were to be expected from his pen, only a full-length book could be the answer. Accordingly one was written and went forth to the wars, until the day arrived when its tattered sheets had been rejected by every possible publisher. Perhaps the ultimate rebuff came by the same post as the tart complaint from the tax office.

At any rate, Doyle was on the verge of despair and surrender when, by some providential trick of the brain, "Joe"



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Bell's eagle-beak came before his mind's eye, and the Great Idea took glimmering shape. Feverishly he began to write, and a few weeks later *A Study in Scarlet*, with a hero surnamed for an admired American poet,<sup>1</sup> and a foil and narrator to be immortally known as Watson, took its turn in the mails. For many weary months it seemed destined for the same fate as the earlier manuscript. At length came an offer. Twenty-five pounds "outright"—less by far than the price of a single copy in the auction rooms to-day. Discouraged and disgusted, the author accepted Ward, Lock and Company's terms and resigned himself to waiting a full year to see his offspring in print.

Even when *Beeton's Christmas Annual* provided one of the most incredible first editions in history, in December, 1887, the battle was far from won. Unlike Byron, the Southsea physician failed to awake to find himself famous. The event, in fact, went to all outward appearances unnoticed; and Doyle in his chagrin had determined never to think of Holmes again, and probably would not have done so but for an unforeseen piece of fortune. On a day in 1889, almost two years after the *Beeton* fiasco, Doyle was summoned to meet a representative of the American magazine, *Lippincott's*, whose editor had admired *A Study in Scarlet* sufficiently to make a substantial offer for another Holmes story. (Thus the world's most renowned detective owes not only his name but his very perpetuation to America—a fact which his grateful creator never forgot.) Encouraged by a substantial advance payment, Doyle worked with much greater care, and in due course *The Sign of the Four*—oh, magical words!—made its bow in *Lippincott's*

<sup>1</sup> Doyle revealed his source of the name in later years. Whether the elder Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was born in the same year as Poe but lived until 1894, knew either the stories or the circumstances of the nomenclature is not revealed. But his son, the great jurist, was to the end an unregenerate Sherlockian, who could still find delight in the Baker Street saga at well past ninety.



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for February, 1890, was published in London later in the year, and scored an immediate popular success on both sides of the water. Fame had knocked at last. Doyle's poverty had made the world immeasurably richer.

The saga begun in 1887 was to continue for a round forty years, though Doyle made numerous and varied attempts to bring it to an earlier end. The narrative of those years has been so brilliantly chronicled by Vincent Starrett and other devoted worshipers at the shrine that it would be sheer effrontery to repeat more than the outline here.

The success of *The Sign of the Four* brought the editor of the young *Strand Magazine* camping on Doyle's doorstep with an assignment for a dozen Holmes short stories. They began in July, 1891. A second twelve tales followed in the same publication. In America, the first series appeared simultaneously in a large number of daily newspapers (no small item in Holmes's early and wide American renown) through the agency of the newly organized McClure's Syndicate; the second series in *Harper's Weekly*. The initial twelve tales were collected between covers as *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, published in England and America in 1892; and eleven of the second twelve (the recalcitrant disciple is preserved in *His Last Bow*) as *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, published in 1894. If any reader be prepared to name two other books that have given more innocent but solid pleasure, let him speak now—or hold his peace!

At the end of the second series Doyle made his most determined attempt to rid himself of his sleuth. Even to-day one shudders at the enormity of the deed. He killed Holmes! The outcry was instant, sincere, and voluminous. (A letter from the distaff side began, "You Beast!") In his own mind Doyle began to wonder if there might not have been an error in his information. The first sign of weakening was the appearance, in 1902, of the full-length Holmes



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novel, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Watson, to be sure, explained carefully that the events antedated the affair of the Reichenbach by some years and that the work was by way of being a posthumous memoir. But the seed of doubt was planted.

The momentous tidings of the colossal mistake came first to the readers of the *Strand* for October, 1903. (It is no apocryphal exaggeration, but a matter of sober publishing record, that queues formed at the London stationers' on publication date.) "The Adventure of the Empty House," the episode chosen to bring the exciting news to the world, was the first of a new series of thirteen tales about the resurrected investigator. In America they appeared in *Collier's Weekly*, with the famous Frederic Dorr Steele illustrations. The collected book version, entitled—inevitably—*The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, was purchasable on both sides of the Atlantic in 1905.

The reading public was properly grateful and would not for any known worlds have had matters otherwise. And yet—the reception of the new tales was not entirely un-mixed. Doyle enjoyed relating a homely incident that expressed the state of the popular mind neatly. "I think, sir," he quoted a Cornish boatman as saying to him, "when Holmes fell over that cliff he may not have killed himself, but he was never quite the same man afterwards." Thus did opinion that deplored the slackening in the quality of the stories at the same time demand their continuance.

In response to this demand, Doyle, with evident and proper reluctance, produced three more Holmes books: *The Valley of Fear* (1915), *His Last Bow* (1917), and *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927). The first of these was a full-length novel, and one which it is to be feared posterity will pronounce sadly inferior to anything else in the saga; the last two were the familiar groupings of short stories that had previously appeared in a number



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of English and American journals over a period of years.

As the *Adventures* were somewhat fresher and more original than the *Memoirs*, so were the *Memoirs* better than the *Return*, and the tales in the *Return* to be preferred to the books that followed. No one knew better than Doyle that each new series and volume marked a perceptible retrogression in his and Holmes's powers—yet in the face of popular clamor he was helpless. One exception may be made to this chronological diminution: *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which, despite the date of its publication, is definitely Early Holmes in both conception and execution. One cannot quarrel, in fact, with those idealists who maintain that Doyle's knighthood in the same year must have been a grateful government's recognition of this masterpiece, rather than the author's Boer War services which were publicly assigned.

### III

The rôle of Doyle and Holmes in resuscitating and rejuvenating the Poe-Gaboriau formula was enormous and far-reaching. It is something of a paradox, therefore—but one which cannot be ignored—that by modern standards the tales must often be pronounced better fiction than detection. They undeniably gave new life-blood to the form; they established a pattern which was to endure for a generation; yet it is certainly no disparagement to point out that they live to-day for the two immortal characters who move through their pages rather than for any particular excellence of plot or deduction. Subjected to purely technical analysis, in fact, they will be found all too frequently loose, obvious, imitative, trite, and repetitious in device and theme.

The detective himself has not escaped his share of just criticism. His frequent empiricism, his intolerance of others, his self-esteem got occasionally under even Wat-



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son's devoted hide. It was not without cause that E. W. Hornung, Doyle's brother-in-law and the creator of Raffles, once punned: "Though he might be more humble, there's no police like Holmes."

No offense is intended by these remarks; and none, one trusts, will be taken by even the most religious of Baker Street apostles. For Sherlock Holmes is a character who magnificently transcends the need for apology. What is it that has given him this opulent estate? For what excellent reasons do we forgive shortcomings we could condone in no one else? Why do we call his very absurdities beloved? The quality is at once simple and difficult to define—and one that many abler technical achievements sorely want. Lacking a single *mot juste* we may speak tentatively of "flavor." Or, to choose a hardier word, "gusto." One hesitates to use the overworked phrase "born story-teller"; yet Doyle's almost naïve zest was certainly a factor.

For it is not intricacy or bafflement that causes the tales to be read and re-read with a never diminishing thrill, when the slick product of to-day is forgotten in an hour. It is the "romantic reality" of their comfortable, nostalgic British heartiness. It is the small boy in all of us, sitting before an open fire, with the winter wind howling around the windows, a-wriggle with sheer pleasure. It is the "snug peril" of *fin de siècle* Baker Street, with hansom cabs rumbling distantly on wet cobblestones, and Moriarty and his minions lurking in the fog. It is the warmth behind drawn curtains, the reek of strong tobacco, the patriotic "VR" done in bullet-pocks on the wall, the gasogene, the spirit case, the dressing-gown, the violin—and the "needle." It is the inevitable bell, the summons to duty and high adventure. It is "Sherlockismus," in the happy Carrollism of Father Knox:

" . . . How do you know that?"

"I followed you."



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"I saw no one."

"That is what you may expect to see when I follow you."

It is the detective on all fours, nose to the ground, tracing a criminal's spoor with small animal sounds of happiness, like the human bloodhound he is. It is the triumphal return to 221B, the "mission of humane vengeance" accomplished, the chase at end, the task well done. It is Holmes, beginning the explanation over one of Mrs Hudson's late suppers. It is Watson's wide-eyed and penultimate, "Marvelous!" It is Sherlock's final and superb, "Elementary!"

William Bolitho came close to the heart of the secret when he wrote of Holmes: "He is more than a book. He is the spirit of a town and a time." Vincent Starrett has suggested the mood and the emotion even more imaginatively:

Granted the opportunity, gentlemen—one might cry, in phrase of Dr Bell—of recovering a single day out of the irrevocable past, how would you choose to spend that sorcerous gift? With Master Shakespeare in his tiring room? With Villon and his companions of the cockleshell? Riding with Rupert or barging it with Cleopatra up the Nile? Or would you choose to squander it on a chase with Sherlock Holmes after a visit to the rooms in Baker Street? There can be only one possible answer, gentlemen, to the question.<sup>2</sup>

### IV

To the devotion Sherlock Holmes has inspired in his readers, from the great to the humble, there are testimonials without end. None of these is more touching than the belief, held for years by thousands, that he was an actual, living human being—a circumstance that constitutes one of the most unusual chapters in literary history.

Countless troubled letters, by the testimony of the postal

\* *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1933.



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authorities, have been addressed with appealing faith to "Mr. Sherlock Holmes, 221B, Baker Street, London." Early in the century a party of visiting French school-boys was taken on an educational tour of the metropolis. Asked what historic sight they chose to see first, they replied with one accord: "The house where Sherlock Holmes lives." When Doyle announced in one of the later stories that Holmes was retiring from London to keep bees in Sussex, the mail was swelled with applications from would-be housekeepers and friendly advice from apiarists, amateur and professional. During the First World War, Doyle (in his late fifties, a government observer and propagandist) was introduced to a French general who shall be nameless. What rank, the general suddenly demanded, did Sherlock Holmes hold in the English army? Searching vainly for humor in his questioner's face, Sir Arthur could only stammer in halting French that the detective was "too old" for active service.

The legend of Holmes's reality has been swelled by other enthusiastic if more sophisticated readers who know well enough that their hero never lived in flesh and blood, but who like to keep up the pretense that he did: high tribute in itself. Already a railway locomotive—running, of course, out of the Baker Street Station—has been named in his honor; and movements are frequently set on foot to erect a statue to his memory. Countless readers have visited Baker Street and photographed and mapped it end-to-end. Prolonged debates have raged over the most likely location of the mythical 221B. (Good cases may be made out for several sites, but the weight of Sherlockian authority seems to favor the present No. 111.) And in far off New York to-day an assorted group of devoted Holmes enthusiasts, headed by Christopher Morley as Gasogene and Tantalus, and calling themselves the Baker Street Irregulars, foregather at appropriately uncertain intervals to dine and



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hear reports of scholarly research in the Sacred Writings and other matters of Conanical import. "221B Culture" is the Morleyesque phrase for the nostalgic pastime.

Someone has accurately said that more has been written *about* Holmes (exclusive of the stories themselves) than any other character in fiction. A good half-dozen full-size published volumes are already given to his career and personality, and the number grows constantly, while the essays and magazine articles amount literally to hundreds; even Watson is achieving a respectable list of memorabilia in his own right. As Harry Hansen has pointed out, there is no other instance in literary annals where the *character* rather than the author is the subject of such fervid admiration.

But if, as these circumstances would seem to suggest, Holmes-worship has become something of a cult in late years, it is certainly defensible as the most innocent and least harmful of all its kind. Its unashamed insistence that what-never-was always-will-be stands in oddly human fashion for a Higher Sanity in a too-real world.

Too many ecstatic superlatives—and the present writer has no doubt been guilty of his share—have been heaped on the gaunt brow of the Southsea physician's chance creation. Yet when all these are removed, Sherlock Holmes still remains the world's best-known and best-loved fictional detective. But for the tales in which he appeared, the detective story as we know it to-day might never have developed—or only in a vastly different and certainly less pleasurable form.



## *To an Undiscerning Critic*

BY A. CONAN DOYLE

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*In A Study in Scarlet, Sherlock Holmes expressed himself frankly and forcibly with respect to two of his confreres. Mr C. Auguste Dupin he described with considerable condescension as "a very inferior fellow," and M Lecoq, he told Watson angrily, was "a miserable bungler." These statements drew widespread criticism for their lack of graciousness and tact, and Holmes was accused, of course, of being motivated by professional jealousy. Neither he nor Watson saw fit to reply to the charges made, but, Dr Arthur Conan Doyle, a literary figure of the times much given to controversy and the championship of lost causes, took up the cudgels aggressively in defense not only of the maligned detective himself but also of the author who had quoted him. Dr Doyle's generous and wholly disinterested gesture in this regard has fortunately been preserved to us in the verse-form in which it was originally made public.*

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Sure there are times when one cries with acidity,  
 "Where are the limits of human stupidity?"  
 Here is a critic who says as a platitude  
 That I am guilty because "in ingratitude  
 Sherlock, the sleuth-hound, with motives ulterior,  
 Sneers at Poe's Dupin as very 'inferior'."  
 Have you not learned, my esteemed commentator,  
 That the created is not the creator?



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As the creator I've praised to satiety  
Poe's Monsieur Dupin, his skill and variety,  
And have admitted that in my detective work  
I owe to my model a deal of selective work.  
But is it not on the verge of inanity  
To put down to me my creation's crude vanity?  
He, the created, would scoff and would sneer,  
Where I, the creator, would bow and revere.  
So please grip this fact with your cerebral tentacle:  
The doll and its maker are never identical.



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# SHERLOCK HOLMES

## THE MAN

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*So much for the putative association of Holmes and Watson with the contemporary writer of their times, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. What we have heard until now is interesting and instructive, but it has become enough. Like Balzac, impatient with the friend who talked only of things which merely could be proved, we are led to cry: "Let us get back to reality!"*

*It is acknowledged, from the evidence Mr Broun and Mr Haycraft have provided, that there must once have been a fictional character named Sherlock Holmes. The delineations of literature are more often obscurant than revealing; yet in this case, from the very beginning, there has been discernible through the myths and the mists of the written word a legendary being of uncommon dignity and worth—a figure that has grown more solid and more clearly visible with every passing year.*

*The profile first so dimly seen now stands out clearly in the gaslight of his age. It is not Sherlock Holmes, the character in a book, with whom we are any more concerned. It is not even Sherlock Holmes the Legend who confronts us. It is Sherlock Holmes the Man.*



## *Ex Libris Sherlock Holmes*

BY HOWARD COLLINS

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*What Sherlock Holmes read and wrote is highly important for the influence it must have had upon the development and refinement of his innate faculties, and, hence, upon his capacity to do the great deeds he did. Mr Howard Collins has explored and given critical appraisal to the whole gamut of the master's accomplishments in the literary field, and his study has great value both for its historical accuracy and for its inspirational suggestion.*

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“THERE is a great garret in my little house which is stuffed with books,” wrote Sherlock Holmes some years after he had retired from his unique career as a consulting detective and withdrawn to his small cottage in the Sussex Downs.<sup>1</sup>

How delightful it would be to spend an afternoon browsing through that attic! We should prefer a stormy day, such as so frequently occurred in Baker Street, when “the wind screamed and the rain beat against the windows and the elemental forces shrieked at mankind through the bars of his civilization, like untamed beasts in a cage.”

First of all we would inspect the many volumes of commonplace books (a most inept label!) into which at very infrequent intervals Holmes pasted newspaper clippings

<sup>1</sup> *The Adventure of the Lion's Mane.*



concerning past cases and crimes and personalities that interested him. "For many years," Dr. Watson tells us, "he had adopted a system of docketing all paragraphs concerning men and things, so that it was difficult to name a subject or person on which he could not at once furnish information."<sup>2</sup>

It is quite probable that only Holmes could have located the information at once, for the system was, to say the least, irregular. In some cases it was conventional enough. Under A, for instance, we have Irene Adler, the New Jersey-born prima donna who was always *the* woman to Holmes.<sup>3</sup> Her biography was sandwiched in between that of a Hebrew rabbi and that of a staff-commander who had written a monograph upon deep-sea fishes. Sherlock's notes on the Baskerville case are appropriately under B. Mr Jeremiah Hayling, the hydraulic engineer concerning whose disappearance in 1888 a want-ad appeared in all the papers, is filed under H,<sup>4</sup> while under M we have the sinister Professor Moriarty, as well as Morgan the poisoner, Merridew of abominable memory, the Mathews who knocked out Sherlock's left canine in the waiting room at Charing Cross, and Colonel Sebastian Moran, beside whose biography Holmes had written in a precise hand, "The second most dangerous man in London."<sup>5</sup>

But not all the filing was so orderly. Under V, for example, although we could readily locate Vittoria, the circus belle; Vanderbilt and the Yeggman; vipers; Vigor, the Hammersmith wonder; and vampires, both of Hungary and Transylvania, it would be distinctly surprising to find under the same letter the voyage of the *Gloria Scott*; Victor Lynch, the forger; and venomous lizard or gila.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *A Scandal in Bohemia.*

<sup>3</sup> *A Scandal in Bohemia.*

<sup>4</sup> *The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb.*

<sup>5</sup> *The Adventure of the Empty House.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire.*



On at least one occasion this remarkable filing system confused even Holmes himself, for, when a landlady consulted him about an unusual lodger named Mrs Ronder, Sherlock "threw himself with fierce energy upon a pile of commonplace books in the corner and for a few moments there was a constant swish of the leaves" before he finally found her listed under Abbas Parva, the small Berkshire village where the lady had undergone a horrible experience.<sup>7</sup>

Only once did the commonplace books fail completely. That was when Holmes was able to find the biographies of Arthur Staunton, the rising young forger; and Henry

Staunton, whom he helped to hang; but not Godfrey Staunton, the right wing three-quarter whose disappearance on the eve of an important match so alarmed Cyril Overton of Trinity College, Cambridge.<sup>8</sup>

Another collection of clippings which might be of considerable interest would be the great book in which, day by day, he filed the agony columns of the great London Journals. "Bleat, un-



<sup>7</sup> *The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger.*



mitigated bleat!" he once described them to Watson, but he kept them nevertheless, and very useful too they proved to be in *The Adventure of the Red Circle* and, no doubt, many other cases as well.

Incidentally, one wonders whether the file of old daily papers, which had once been packed in a lumber room, have still been preserved.<sup>9</sup> Probably there were too many of them to keep, for fresh editions of every paper were supplied by the news agent,<sup>10</sup> although Holmes read nothing in them but the criminal news and the agony columns.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps of even more interest than the commonplace books would be the small case book which he kept locked in his desk. It is mentioned only once, on the occasion when the terrified Helen Stoner called early one morning in April, 1883.<sup>12</sup> Miss Stoner had mentioned getting Sherlock's address from Mrs Farintosh, whom he had helped in the hour of her sore need.

"Farintosh," said Holmes, consulting the case book. "Ah yes, I recall the case; it was concerned with an opal tiara. I think it was before your time, Watson.<sup>13</sup> I can only say, madam, that I shall be happy to devote the same care to your case as I did to that of your friend."

What, one wonders, was recorded in the case book that made up Sherlock's mind? Was it there that he kept a memorandum of his fees? We have so few records of his income—and those chiefly of the more spectacular rewards, such as the £1,000 from Alexander Holder<sup>14</sup> and the £6,000 (or

<sup>8</sup> *The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter.*

<sup>9</sup> *The Adventure of the Six Napoleons.*

<sup>10</sup> *Silver Blaze.*

<sup>11</sup> *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor.*

<sup>12</sup> *The Adventure of the Speckled Band.*

<sup>13</sup> But if it was before Watson's time, how did she get the Baker Street address? Elementary! The case was begun before Watson and Holmes met, and the bill was rendered after the case was completed, by which time Holmes had moved to Baker Street.

<sup>14</sup> *The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet.*



was it £12,000?) from the Duke of Holderness<sup>15</sup>—that it would be interesting to know just how much he charged his poorer clients, such as Mary Sutherland, the typist whose fiancé had left her waiting at the church;<sup>16</sup> and the unhappy John Hector McFarlane, about whom Holmes made the classic deduction;<sup>17</sup> and Violet Hunter, chestnut-haired governess of *The Copper Beeches*.

Sherlock's diary<sup>18</sup> was probably kept in that same locked desk.

A great many of the books in that Sussex attic are of course reference books, most of them now out of date and having little but association value.

There is for instance at least the first volume of the gazetteer just being published at the time of *The Sign of the Four*, in which Holmes discovered the traits of the Andaman Islanders and thus the identity of Jonathan Small's strange companion. This is not to be confused with the *Continental Gazetteer*, by consulting which Holmes was able to deduce the nationality of his distinguished visitor in *A Scandal in Bohemia* even before that gentleman made his appearance. The clue, you will recall, was the watermark of the mill which manufactured the paper on which His Highness' note of appointment was written.

Then, too, we would probably find the *American Encyclopedia*, so full of information about the Ku Klux Klan and so reticent about the nicknames of the States of the Union.<sup>19</sup>

It is recorded in *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*

<sup>15</sup> *The Adventure of the Priory School*.

<sup>16</sup> *A Case of Identity*.

<sup>17</sup> *The Adventure of the Norwood Builder*: "You mentioned your name, as if I should recognize it, but I assure you that, beyond the obvious facts that you are a bachelor, a solicitor, a Freemason, and an asthmatic, I know nothing whatever about you."

<sup>18</sup> *The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier*.

<sup>19</sup> *The Five Orange Pips*.



that Holmes kept a row of reference books in a shelf beside the mantel-piece. The red-covered volume in which he looked up Lord Robert St. Simon must have been either *Who's Who* or *Burke's Peerage*. Several of these books contained a write-up of Professor Moriarty with a mention of his £700 salary.<sup>20</sup>

Another volume frequently in use was *Bradshaw's Railway Guide*.<sup>21</sup> The current yellow-covered *Whitaker's Almanac* was undoubtedly on that shelf, the back numbers being stored in a cupboard.<sup>22</sup> And probably on the shelf below was the encyclopedia of reference, in whose volume H was the Duke of Holderness.<sup>23</sup>

It was not, by the way, until June, 1902, that Holmes acquired a telephone, and with it, naturally, a telephone directory.<sup>24</sup>

Despite these many volumes, Sherlock's library was not so complete as he might have wished, for it will be remembered that in *The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge* he spent a morning in the British Museum reading Eckermann on *Voodooism and the Negroid Religions*.

Very useful for reference purposes also were the maps, of which Holmes had a considerable collection. In *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans* he spread out his big map of London ("It is a hobby of mine to have an exact knowledge of London."<sup>25</sup>) and noted with an exclamation of satisfaction that the residence of Hugo Oberstein abutted upon the Underground, which fact demonstrated how the body of Cadogan West was placed on top of a subway train. He also acquired ordnance maps of the Priory School neighborhood and the environs of Baskerville Hall,

<sup>20</sup> *The Valley of Fear*.

<sup>21</sup> *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*.

<sup>22</sup> *The Valley of Fear*.

<sup>23</sup> *The Adventure of the Priory School*.

<sup>24</sup> *The Adventure of the Three Garridebs*.

<sup>25</sup> *The Red-Headed League*.



and in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* he found it necessary to purchase a map of the Colony of Victoria. Nor can we overlook the one-penny pamphlet entitled *The History of Birlstone Manor* which provided him with some essential information in *The Valley of Fear*.

Presumably Sherlock's own publications were all represented upon the shelves.

"I have been guilty of several monographs," he once told Watson. "They are all upon technical subjects. Here, for example, is one *Upon the Distinction between the Ashes of the Various Tobaccos*. In it I enumerate a hundred and forty forms of cigar, cigarette, and pipe tobacco, with colored plates illustrating the difference in the ash. . . . To the trained eye there is as much difference between the black ash of the Trichinopoly and the white fluff of bird's-eye as there is between a cabbage and a potato."<sup>26</sup>

Another one was *Upon the Tracing of Footsteps*, with some remarks upon the uses of plaster of Paris as a preserver of impresses. Still another one was *Upon the Influence of a Trade Upon the Form of the Hand*, with lithotypes of the hands of slaters, sailors, cork-cutters, compositors, weavers, and diamond polishers.<sup>27</sup> Incidentally, Sherlock could also tell a weaver by his tooth and a compositor by his left thumb.<sup>28</sup>

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Holmes not only mentions his monograph on the dating of documents but also demonstrates his ability by estimating at a glance the date of the ancient Baskerville manuscript within twelve years. Some years later we find him engaged with a powerful lens deciphering the original inscription upon a palimpsest,<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *The Sign of the Four*.

<sup>27</sup> *The Sign of the Four*.

<sup>28</sup> *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*.

<sup>29</sup> *The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez*.



and in the following year pursuing some laborious researches in early English charters.<sup>30</sup>

"I have made a small study of tattoo marks," says Holmes in *The Red-Headed League*, "and have even contributed to the literature of the subject." Thus he knew that the fish tattooed on Jabez Wilson's wrist could have been done only in China because of the delicate pink of the fish scales. He could also perceive that the elder Trevor had been trying to obliterate the initials tattooed in the bend of his elbow.<sup>31</sup>

In *The Adventure of the Dancing Men* he asserts, "I am fairly familiar with all forms of secret writings, and am myself the author of a trifling monograph upon the subject, in which I analyze one hundred and sixty separate ciphers."

Holmes also contributed two short monographs to the *Anthropological Journal* upon variations in the shape of the human ear,<sup>32</sup> and was the author of a magazine article, quite early in his career, on the science of deduction and analysis entitled *The Book of Life*.<sup>33</sup>

Not long after taking up the hobby of medieval music he had printed for private circulation a monograph *Upon the Polyphonic Motets of Lassus*, a work said by experts to be the last word upon the subject.<sup>34</sup>

Talked about but not definitely written according to the Watson saga were several other monographs. An essay on the typewriter and its relation to crime was suggested by the sixteen characteristics of the machine on which Mr Windibank wrote love letters to his step-daughter.<sup>35</sup> In 1897, while vacationing on the Cornish peninsula, Holmes endeavored to trace the Chaldean origin of the ancient

<sup>30</sup> *The Adventure of the Three Students.*

<sup>31</sup> *The "Gloria Scott."*

<sup>32</sup> *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box.*

<sup>33</sup> *A Study in Scarlet.*

<sup>34</sup> *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans.*

<sup>35</sup> *A Case of Identity.*



Cornish language and in so doing added to his library a consignment of books on philology.<sup>36</sup> He once had serious thoughts of writing an article about the uses of dogs in the work of the detective, in which the subtle parallel between the characters of dogs and their owners would be emphasized.<sup>37</sup> Malingering was still another subject upon which he thought of writing.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps all of these subjects will be taken up if Holmes ever gets around to writing *The Whole Art of Detection*, a one-volume text book to which he expects to devote his declining years.<sup>39</sup> But Holmes is a nonagenarian already, a hermit among his bees and books, and so this great book may never be written. It may have been a confession of his abandonment of the project when he declared that his *Practical Handbook of Bee Culture, with Some Observations upon the Segregation of the Queen* (a small blue book with a gold-lettered title) was the *magnum opus* of his later years.<sup>40</sup>

But not all of the volumes with which that Sussex garret is stuffed are reference books. Holmes had a well-rounded taste in reading, acquired during his university days. During the long vacation of his last year, it will be remembered, he visited the home of Victor Trevor, one of his few

<sup>36</sup> *The Adventure of the Devil's Foot.*

<sup>37</sup> *The Adventure of the Creeping Man.*

<sup>38</sup> *The Adventure of the Dying Detective.* Sherlock's proficiency in the art was effectively demonstrated in this case when he went three days without food and water in order to simulate an obscure Sumatra fever. In *The Reigate Puzzle* he threw a fit which completely fooled Dr. Watson, and in *The Resident Patient* he states that he has successfully imitated catalepsy.

<sup>39</sup> *The Adventure of the Abbey Grange.* Other topics include bicycle tires ("I am familiar with forty-two impressions left by tires," he says in *The Adventure of the Priory School*), type faces ("one of the most elementary branches of knowledge to the special expert in crime"), and perfumes. ("There are seventy-five perfumes which it is very necessary that a criminal expert should be able to distinguish from each other," he declares in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.)

<sup>40</sup> *His Last Bow.*



college acquaintances. Some years later, while reminiscing to Watson about this visit,<sup>41</sup> he mentions that the elder Trevor had "a small but select library." That the library had been taken over from a former occupant accounted, no doubt, for the fact that its owner "knew hardly any books."

To a book lover this expression is significant.

Certain it is that Holmes was able to converse authoritatively and entertainingly upon a variety of subjects. "I am an omnivorous reader," he once remarked, "with a strangely retentive memory for trifles."<sup>42</sup>

"Holmes could talk exceedingly well when he chose," says Watson, and, at the merry meal preceding the break-neck chase down the Thames after Jonathan Small and his savage companion, Sherlock was brilliant. "He spoke on a quick succession of subjects—on miracle plays, on mediæval pottery, on Stradivarius violins, on the Buddhism of Ceylon, and on the warships of the future—handling each as though he had made a special study of it."<sup>43</sup>

On another occasion, after tea on a summer evening, the conversation between Holmes and Watson roamed from golf clubs to the causes of the change in the obliquity of the ecliptic and finally to the question of atavism and hereditary aptitudes.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps a good meal was inspiring, for in *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box* Watson recalls: "We had a pleasant little meal together, during which Holmes would talk about nothing but violins, narrating with great exultation how he had purchased his own Stradivarius, which was worth at least five hundred guineas, at a Jew broker's in Tottenham Court for fifty-five shillings. This led him to Paganini, and we sat for an hour over a bottle of claret

<sup>41</sup> *The "Gloria Scott."*

<sup>42</sup> *The Adventure of the Lion's Mane.*

<sup>43</sup> *The Sign of the Four.*

<sup>44</sup> *The Greek Interpreter.*



while he told me anecdote after anecdote of that extraordinary man."

Further evidence of Sherlock's wide reading may be deduced from the ease and frequency with which he quotes from and alludes to the classics. In *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*, for example, he mentions Thoreau's famous remark on circumstantial evidence. In *A Case of Identity* he recognizes a quotation from Balzac in one of Hosmer Angel's letters. In *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire* he alludes to Grimms' fairy tales, and in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* he takes time out from clue-chasing to talk of George Meredith. On various other occasions he alludes to or quotes from Keats, Boswell, Isaac Watts, Longfellow, Cuvier, and Darwin. Again in *A Case of Identity* we find him comparing Hafiz and Horace, while in *The Sign of the Four* he compares Jean Paul (Richter) and Carlyle so authoritatively that there can be no question about whether or not he was spoofing Watson in the first days of their association when he declared that he had never heard of the British sage.<sup>45</sup>

That Sherlock knew his Shakespeare is evident not only from his frequent quoting of the bard but especially in his happy paraphrase from *Henry V* when, in *The Adventure of the Three Students*, he mentions that the landlady "babbled of green peas."

On the other hand, his Biblical knowledge, as he himself admitted, was a trifle rusty, though it enabled him to clear up a mysterious point in *The Crooked Man*. The rustiness is more apparent in *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* when he cries impatiently, "Data! data! data! I can't make bricks without clay!"<sup>46</sup> It would appear from the first

<sup>45</sup> *A Study in Scarlet*. Holmes also claimed complete ignorance of the composition of the solar system, but in *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans* he compares his brother Mycroft's visit to a planet leaving its orbit, and in *The Greek Interpreter* he discusses the ecliptic.

<sup>46</sup> *Exodus*, V, 7. "Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick."



chapter of *The Valley of Fear* that a Bible was not one of the volumes in the Holmes collection. In trying to determine what commonly-used double-columned book might have been employed in the Porlock cipher message, Watson suggests the Bible. "Good," admits Holmes, "but not good enough. Even if I accepted the compliment for myself, I could hardly name any volume which would be less likely to lie at the elbow of one of Moriarty's associates."

Sherlock's reading was by no means restricted to one language. Frequently we find him quoting French, German, and Latin. At the conclusion of *A Case of Identity*, for instance, he quotes from Flaubert; in *The Sign of the Four*, on two occasions, from Goethe; and, at the end of *A Study in Scarlet*, from Horace. It was in the latter story, too, that he purchased a queer old book, *De Jure inter Gentes*, published in Latin in 1642.

It is a pleasant picture which Watson paints of Sherlock "buried among his old books"<sup>47</sup> and indulging in periods of lethargy "during which he would lie about with his violin and his books, hardly moving from the sofa to the table."<sup>48</sup>

No doubt his reading varied with his moods: one day a thoughtful perusing of Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*;<sup>49</sup> another day a pleasant browsing through *Out of Doors*, a little chocolate and silver volume by the famous observer, J. C. Wood;<sup>50</sup> and still another in a scornful analysis of Poe's sketches or the works of Gaboriau.<sup>51</sup>

And it is an obvious deduction that, in the course of studying the personality of Professor Moriarty, he had read

<sup>47</sup> *A Scandal in Bohemia*.

<sup>48</sup> *The Musgrave Ritual*.

<sup>49</sup> *The Sign of the Four*. "Let me recommend this book—one of the most remarkable ever penned."

<sup>50</sup> *The Adventure of the Lion's Mane*.

<sup>51</sup> *A Study in Scarlet*.



that scholar's *Treatise on the Binomial Theorem*, which had a European vogue and won for its author the mathematics chair at one of the smaller universities,<sup>52</sup> as well as *The Dynamics of an Asteroid*, a book which ascended to such rarefied heights of pure mathematics that it was said there was no man in the scientific press capable of criticizing it.<sup>53</sup>

Equally erudite items in the Holmes library were the quartet of volumes which served as props when he made his famous "return" in the guise of an elderly and deformed bibliophile.<sup>54</sup> They were *The Origin of Tree Worship*, *British Birds*, *Catullus*, and *The Holy War*, and their bulk was great enough that they might have filled the untidy gap on Watson's shelf if he had bought them.

And what of Watson's reading?

His books, we are told in *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box*, were kept separate from Sherlock's, on a shelf beneath the unframed portrait of Henry Ward Beecher. Many of them were, of course, medical books and periodicals. Watson apparently kept up with his profession even when not pursuing it, for in 1887 he plunges furiously into the latest treatise on pathology in an effort to keep from thinking about the dazzling Mary Morstan,<sup>55</sup> and in 1894 we note that he is reading a recent treatise on surgery.<sup>56</sup> He also bought the annual medical directory,<sup>57</sup> subscribed to the *British Medical Journal*,<sup>58</sup> and undoubtedly was one of the few purchasers of Dr Percy Trevelyan's monograph upon obscure nervous lesions<sup>59</sup> which won

<sup>52</sup> *The Final Problem*.

<sup>53</sup> *The Valley of Fear*.

<sup>54</sup> *The Adventure of the Empty House*.

<sup>55</sup> *The Sign of the Four*.

<sup>56</sup> *The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez*.

<sup>57</sup> *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

<sup>58</sup> *The Stockbroker's Clerk*.

<sup>59</sup> *The Resident Patient*.



the Bruce Pinkerton prize at King's College Hospital.

Prominent on the shelf would be his own works: a small brochure with the somewhat fantastic title of *A Study in Scarlet*<sup>60</sup> and another volume called *The Sign of the Four*<sup>61</sup> are specifically mentioned in the annals, and no doubt the other tales were added as soon as they were published. Watson also kept a scrapbook, into which he pasted clippings about Sherlock's cases,<sup>62</sup> and a notebook upon whose pages he jotted his none-too-accurate observations.<sup>63</sup>

But the good doctor had other interests too. On stormy evenings he liked to sit by the fireplace deep in one of Clark Russell's fine sea stories, until the howl of the gale without seemed to blend with the text, and the splash of the rain to lengthen out into the long swish of the sea waves.<sup>64</sup> At other times Henri Murger's *Vie de Bohême* attracted him.<sup>65</sup> Even during his married life he would sit up late "nodding over a novel."<sup>66</sup> Often, it may be presumed, it was a "yellow-backed" novel; at least it was in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*.

It would not be too surprising to find in Watson's collection a pocket edition of the *Decameron* with the name of Joseph Stangerson upon the flyleaf—a souvenir of the Enoch Drebbler murder.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps it was from that volume, and from romances typified by those mentioned above, that the shy doctor acquired his experience of women which "extended over many nations and three separate continents."<sup>68</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *The Sign of the Four*.

<sup>61</sup> *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box*.

<sup>62</sup> *The Sign of the Four*.

<sup>63</sup> *The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge*.

<sup>64</sup> *The Five Orange Pips*.

<sup>65</sup> *A Study in Scarlet*.

<sup>66</sup> *The Crooked Man*.

<sup>67</sup> *A Study in Scarlet*.

<sup>68</sup> *The Sign of the Four*.



## *Was Sherlock Holmes a Drug Addict?*

BY GEORGE F. MCCLEARY, M.D.

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*The greatest calumny upon the name of Sherlock Holmes is the noxious phrase "Quick, Watson, the needle!" attributed to him by the uninitiate. This vulgarism, which is of course non-existent in the Sacred Writings, has unfortunately gained a widespread and irreverent currency. It is true that in his younger and less occupied days Holmes did resort to hypodermic injections of cocaine and morphine in an effort to escape from boredom (or perhaps, as Dr Goodman suggests, from toothache); but his indulgence was casual and sporadic, and it definitely never became habitual. As early as 1897, in fact, the practice was entirely abandoned.*

*Dr George F. McCleary, who has given long study to this narcotic problem, takes an even more optimistic view of Holmes's innocence. His observations, published in the London Lancet for December 26, 1936, as those of "An Occasional Correspondent," are worthy of careful consideration by the earnest student.*

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THE PERSONALITY OF Sherlock Holmes has excited so much interest that for years scholars in England and America have engaged in acute controversy on various points on which the text of the Holmes chronicles is obscure, deficient, or, apparently, contradictory. Was Holmes an Oxford or a Cambridge man? Was he dependent on his pro-



### *Was Sherlock Holmes a Drug Addict?*

fessional earnings? Did Watson marry one, two, or three wives? On these and similar questions the most learned authorities are at variance. No attempt has, however, yet been made, so far as I am aware, to examine a more important question: Can we accept Watson's statements that Holmes was once a victim to the cocaine habit?

It seems that the two men first met late in 1880. We know that Watson joined the army soon after taking his M.D. degree in 1878; that he was wounded at the battle of Maiwand, which was fought on July 27th, 1880; that he was some months in hospital before going home on sick leave; and that shortly after returning to London he and Holmes began their joint occupation of the rooms at 221B, Baker Street. At an early stage of their acquaintance he drew up a list of Holmes's chief characteristics, which, he reminded Holmes some time later, contained the item "self-poisoner by cocaine and tobacco." No wonder that Holmes "grinned" on hearing this remark; for the list, which is set out in *A Study in Scarlet*, contains no such item. This discrepancy, which seems to have passed unnoticed by Holmesian scholars, is but one instance of Watson's inaccuracy in recording events.

The alleged addiction is first mentioned in *The Sign of the Four*, which describes events that took place in July, 1887. Watson states that he saw Holmes give himself a hypodermic injection of what Holmes told him was a 7 per cent solution of cocaine; and he adds that this performance had been seen by him "three times a day for many months," and that Holmes said he took cocaine to escape from boredom when not occupied with his cases. Watson records no other administration of the drug; but he refers to Holmes's cocaine habit in *A Scandal in Bohemia* and *The Yellow Face*, and, for the last time, in *The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter*, a case, probably investigated in 1897, which, Watson states, followed one of those periods of in-



action he had learnt to dread: "For years I had gradually weaned him from that drug mania which had threatened once to check his remarkable career . . . but I was well aware that the fiend was not dead but sleeping." He describes his horror when he saw Holmes holding a hypodermic syringe, and his relief on finding that it was to be used to squirt aniseed solution on the hind wheel of a doctor's car to enable a draghound to trace it to its destination.

Though Watson was on intimate terms with Holmes he watched the daily dosing for a long time before making any attempt to check it. Not until "many months" had elapsed did he venture, after a luncheon that included an unspecified quantity of Beaune, upon a mild remonstrance, which was taken in excellent part by the supposed addict. The history of Holmes's alleged drug addiction is, in short, that it began "many months" before July, 1887, and was gradually discontinued under Watson's treatment, extending over "years," some time before 1897.

Now Holmes was not one of those men who are unable to occupy themselves unless some definite task is presented to them. He was a man of immense mental resource and initiative. He was an expert chemist, an accomplished linguist—with an intimate knowledge of Goethe and Petrarch—an assiduous student of Black Letter texts, a capable performer on the most exacting of all instruments—the violin—a composer, and an authority on the music of the Middle Ages. That a man with such resources should be driven by ennui to seek distraction in cocaine is so improbable that nothing but the strongest evidence could make it credible.

Nor was the great detective in other respects of the stuff of which cocaine addicts are made. The victim to cocaine is not, like the opium addict, a solitary self-poisoner; he is sociable and prefers to take his dope in company. The first effect of the drug upon him is to make him lively and voluble in disconnected talk. He tries to make jokes and shine



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as a brilliant person. The opium addict may be a man of exceptional powers: Coleridge and De Quincey are examples; but the victim to cocaine is lacking in mental capacity—incurious, vacuous, needing the gross stimulus of a drug to rouse his interest in life. The continued use of cocaine leads to degeneration—physical, mental, and moral. All this is the antithesis of what we find in Holmes, who was the most unsociable of men: reserved, self-controlled, self-sufficient. There was no falling off in his mental powers, his physical activity, or his character. The effects of his alleged dosings, as described by Watson, are not the manifestations of cocaine poisoning.

Moreover, the gradual “weaning” treatment that Watson adopted is unusual in such a case. The sudden discontinuance of cocaine does not give rise to the distressing withdrawal symptoms that follow the sudden discontinuance of morphia. This must have been known to Holmes, who was far more deeply versed in the effects of poisons than his medical friend. Watson was an inexperienced practitioner. There is no evidence that he was in civil practice before he joined the army, and he was invalided out after some two years’ service. For about seven years afterwards he apparently made no attempt to improve his professional proficiency either by post-graduate study or otherwise, but led an idle life, except for the assistance he gave Holmes in the cases in which they collaborated and for his literary work in recording a number of cases. It is most unlikely that a man of Holmes’s overpowering personality would be influenced by Watson in a matter so personal as the discontinuance of a drug habit. On the other hand, we have Watson’s statement that he actually saw Holmes inject himself with what he said was a solution of cocaine, and that his forearm and wrist were “all dotted and scarred with innumerable puncture points.” How can this statement be explained?



The explanation is, I suggest, that Holmes was pulling the good Watson's leg. He had a sense of ironic humour, and when he disguised himself for professional purposes he was delighted at Watson's failure to penetrate the disguise. He was a consummate actor, and in *The Adventure of the Dying Detective* he shammed a severe illness with such skill that Watson, completely deceived, was prevented only by extreme measures from rushing out for assistance from Harley Street. The puncture marks could easily be counterfeited by a man so proficient in make-up as Holmes; and we have no evidence beyond Holmes's own statement that the bottle Watson called the "cocaine bottle" ever contained cocaine. It was like Holmes to enjoy mystifying Watson and watching his attempts to screw up his courage to protest against his friend's self-poisoning. What happened when Watson, emboldened by Beaune, did protest is consistent with the hypothesis of a leg-pull: "He did not seem offended. On the contrary, he put his finger-tips together, and leaned his elbows on the arms of his chair, like one who has a relish for conversation."

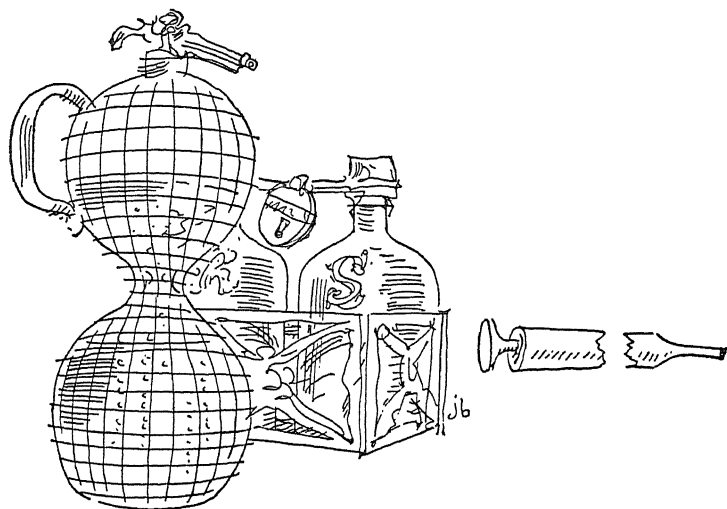
The hypothesis explains also Watson's account of his "weaning" treatment. Holmes, who had a genuine affection for his Boswell, was doubtless intensely amused at the "weaning" efforts, which probably began when Watson after his marriage purchased a small practice in Paddington. Holmes naturally wished to encourage his friend in his new rôle of general medical practitioner by allowing him to think he was successfully treating a difficult case of drug addiction.

All we know of Holmes's alleged addiction can be explained if we assume that he did not actually take the drug, but mystified Watson into believing that he did. The facts can be explained on no other hypothesis. This conclusion reflects unfavourably on the professional competence of Dr Watson; but the interests of truth are paramount, and this



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contribution to the literature that has gathered round Holmes is offered in justice to the most famous character that has appeared on the English scene since the great days of Dickens.









## *Triolet*

*On the Immortality of Sherlock Holmes and  
Doctor Watson*

BY "BUTTONS"

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They cannot die, because they live  
    Within the minds and hearts of men;  
Because their lives are putative  
They cannot die; because they live  
Deific for the things they give  
    They'll stand in Baker Street again—  
They cannot die; because they live  
    Within the minds and hearts of men.



## *Clinical Notes by a Resident Patient*

BY CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

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*By reason of his long-standing friendship with Stanley Hopkins, O.B.E., Chief Inspector, C.I.D. (Retired), it has been possible for Mr Christopher Morley to keep in touch with Sherlock Holmes, over the years, to better advantage than most of his fellow-countrymen. Champion of the theory that Holmes himself was an American (perhaps an anticipatory Rhodes scholar who went native?), Mr Morley has long made it a practice to set down such random thoughts as come to him, now and again, out of his cogitations upon the life and times of the master. What he calls his "clinical notes," written in his happily-assumed capacity as one of Dr Watson's resident patients in the house in Baker Street, are a veritable quarry of reminiscence and speculation. We are privileged to print several extracts from this important—and so far unpublished—journal.*

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I WAS DELIGHTED to get a letter today from Chief Inspector (Retired) Stanley Hopkins. The earlier portion is perhaps irrelevant, dealing with his impressions of some Senators who had been traveling in England, but some of his biographical comments on his old friend Mr Sherlock Holmes are interesting:

"If the weather is tolerable," he writes, "I hope to get down to Sussex to see Mr Holmes for his birthday in January—think of it, 90 years!



## *Clinical Notes by a Resident Patient*

"The last time I saw him he was very much gratified when I told him of the various inquiries made by the members of your club. There were two prime reasons (besides climate) why he retired to Sussex rather than his native Yorkshire. First, the excellent Turkish baths at the Grand Hotel in Eastbourne; a cab used to drive out once a week to his cottage to take him in to Eastbourne for a good steaming. 'Pleasant lassitude,' he used to say with a chuckle, quoting the Doctor's phrase. The other reason was his admiration for T. H. Huxley, who had also retired to Eastbourne after so much severe mental exertion. When Huxley died (about 1895, I think) Holmes said he thought Eastbourne deserved another rationalist. After his Turkish bath he always went to the Eastbourne concert pavilion, which was famous for good music. He used to sit there waving his hands dreamily, and chuckling 'Lassitude and di Lasso.'

"It was really rather fortunate that all that coast was so carefully barred off in the time of invasion scare. Of course, Mr Holmes was not forced to evacuate; the Ministry made a special exception in his case; but the barbed wire barriers and gun pits and restricted areas prevented Mr Holmes from the rambles which were really hazardous for a man of his years. Did you hear of the time he almost got into trouble by doing some unauthorized digging in the ruins of Wilmington Priory, only a few miles from his cottage? He was convinced that some early English charters were concealed there.

"The gift sent me by your Irregulars is warmly appreciated. I think the best proof of the United Nations once more having command of the seas was to get that box of 1000 from Ionides<sup>1</sup> of Alexandria! My salaams to you all."

. . . . .

Hopkins is nearly 78 himself now, and an O.B.E. But, as he says, "I'm still not entirely a crock, and do my share as a Senior Warden—we've had plenty of plastering down here in Kent." His letter led me to get out a Bartholomew Survey Map of Sussex, and I suddenly realized that our ad-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez*, in which Inspector Hopkins figured prominently, if somewhat ineffectually.



### *Sherlock Holmes the Man*

mired cartographer Dr Wolff has seriously erred in placing the Fulworth bee-farm.<sup>2</sup> It is expressly stated that it is "five miles from Eastbourne"; whereas Dr Wolff has spotted it westward of Newhaven. Five miles by road over the height of the Downs, westward from Eastbourne, would bring us just about to the famous Seven Sisters (chalk cliffs; there is a gorgeous photo of them in *The Beauty of Britain*, introduction by J. B. Priestley, published by Scribners in 1935—Batsford in London—op. p. 51; if you want to see the view Holmes mentions in *The Adventure of the Lion's Mane*). The village of Fulworth seems to me evidently Cuckmere Haven, between Eastbourne and Seaford. Outside Cuckmere Haven is some sort of formation—rocks or cliffs or breakers, I don't know what—marked as *The Mares*, which suggests Manes. And Birling Gap (between Beachy Head and Cuckmere Haven) has a suggestion of Birlstone, not far away?

. . . . .

These are but toys; yet pleasing toys. In that region, if Sherlock wanted a drink he would walk over to the famous pub The Star at Alfriston, of which Belloc or someone, or Chesterton or someone or Theodore Maynard or someone, wrote a ballade: "The Star at Alfriston sells damned good beer." He would then be very near The Long Man of Wilmington—not a pub but a prehistoric figure cut out of the slopes of chalk. . . . Which reminds me, how many American readers, when they hear of the Singular Contents of the Ancient British Barrow, suppose it was a wheelbarrow?

. . . . .

Holmes himself was no mean cartographer (remember the Priory School terrain) and he would have enjoyed Dr

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Dr Wolff's end-papers to this volume.



*Clinical Notes by a Resident Patient*

Wolff's maps. Here for the first time we get a tempting glimpse of Uffa, *insula incognita*. I am not *quite* sure of the rig of some of Dr Wolff's vessels: but to pester the matter would put one in a class with the notorious canary trainer. . . . Fulworth might, after all, be really the *Lulworth* remembered for John Keats, though that was in Dorset.

. . . . .

Vincent Starrett has written delightfully of Mrs Hudson of Sussex and Baker Street.<sup>3</sup> I know it is not quite cricket to go outside the canon, yet I could not resist suggesting to Vincent that in chapter 2 of *The Firm of Girdlestone* there is a Mrs Hudson, widowed in 1874 by the death of her husband, a bosun in one of the Girdlestone ships, who might quite reasonably have become, a few years later, the landlady of 221B.

. . . . .

I've been wondering if anyone has ever noted the extreme ingenuity of the publishers' solution of the problem of right vs. left hand rule of the road. In the familiar picture of Holmes and Watson on Regent Street, watched by Stapleton *en barbe* from the hansom, the McClure Phillips edition of the *Hound* shows traffic moving on the right-hand side of the street (to placate American readers?) whereas in the George Newnes edition the same picture is printed reversed and the vehicles move in the correct left-hand direction. What strikes me as thoroughly odd is that the drawing (by Sidney Paget) was plainly done to show *right-hand* rule of the road, for in the English edition the artist's name comes out printed in looking-glass fashion.

Now how does one account for that?

. . . . .

\* Cf. *The Singular Adventures of Martha Hudson*, in this volume.



Speaking of *en barbe*, I can't do better than quote again from something Stanley Hopkins once wrote me:

"I was amused," he said, "by your allusion to one of your members who is writing a monograph on Beards and Sherlock Holmes. What oddities you Americans think of! I can testify that Mr Holmes did think of growing a beard in the later years, because as Mrs Hudson grew older she never got his shaving water hot enough; but I think he was really prejudiced against them because so many rascals in his cases were conspicuous for hairy faces. Also he found a beard interfered with his eating honey, and you know he has always had a catlike neatness."

. . . . .

Mr Edgar Smith may need to reconsider our old argument whether the famous March 4th in the *Study in Scarlet* was 1881 or 1882. His case for 1882 is plausibly set forth in *The Long Road from Maiwand*—Mr Smith contends

that all the things that happened to Watson from the time he was wounded to the time Holmes revealed his profession could not possibly have taken place in the seven and a half months between July 27, 1880, and March 4, 1881. Yet I ask him to remember that in those earliest Baker Street days, when Holmes and Watson had been living together for about six weeks, Watson raised the topic of Carlyle. And why? Because Carlyle





died on February 5, 1881! Watson of course had read all the published obituaries, and they were undoubtedly still fresh in his mind, including the one referred to by George Gissing who wrote (in London, February 11, '81) that "I have just risen from the memoir of Carlyle in *The Times*." Obviously, Carlyle's recent death was the occasion for the mention Watson made of him.

It will be argued—in fact it has been—that Holmes responded to this mention by inquiring naïvely who Carlyle was and what he had done—an unlikely question for an omnivorous newspaper reader to ask just a few days after a great man's death, but not quite so unlikely a year later. To this I reply that in suggesting his ignorance in this manner Holmes was gently pulling Watson's leg, for shortly thereafter he glibly quotes Carlyle's most famous apothegm.

My theory remains, therefore, that the day of the meeting of Watson and Stamford at the Criterion bar was January 1, 1881—a day when Watson would naturally be making resolutions for a more frugal life (though the lunch with wine at the Holborn must have been costly). Also the fact that it was a holiday would account for Holmes being the only student at work in the laboratory. Watson went back to the hotel—could it have been the Craven Hotel, in Craven Street, Strand???—got rid of the bull pup (hence never mentioned again?) and the next day, Sunday, January 2, they went to look at the lodgings.

The two theories could be checked, maybe, by reference to weather bureau files. Was Friday, March 4, 1881—or Saturday, March 4, 1882—a foggy day after a rainy night? (Presumably they both were.)

. . . . .

Yet how are we to clarify the Watsonian muddle? It was on the 4th of March "as I have good reason to remember."



But then in chapter 6 the doctor quotes the morning papers. The *Standard* spoke of "*Tuesday, the 4th inst.*" What are we to make of that? If the murder took place in the night of the 3rd-4th, certainly Drebber and Stangerson said goodbye to their landlady on the night of the 3rd *inst.* If the 3rd *inst.* was a Tuesday, according to the calendar the year was either 1874 or 1885. If the *Standard* was correct and the 4th *inst.* was a Tuesday, the year must have been either 1879 or 1884. Or was Watson deliberately showing the conservative old *Standard* (not to be confused with the present *Evening Standard*) in a confusion of dates?

It might be well to send to the Public Library for *The Life and Letters of Sir Charles Hallé*, by C. E. and M. Hallé, to see whether he impresarioed a recital by Norman Neruda on the afternoon of March 4, 1881—or 1882. Hallé (1819-1895) was a noted concert manager of the time, and himself a musician of high repute. By the way, he not only impresarioed Neruda, he also married her.

. . . . .

I said once<sup>4</sup> that "a careful study of the *Strand* magazine text is prerequisite for any solid Sherlockian scholarship." I've been looking over the old volumes again, and call attention to the fact that Watson was a good conscientious plugger for *Strand* magazine features. Is it only coincidence that in the issue of October '91 there was a sea story ("Three in Charge") by Clark Russell; and lo, in the very next number, November '91, we find the good Watson reading Clark Russell by the fire, that stormy evening that began the affair of the *Five Orange Pips*? And then the issue of the *Strand* for March, 1892, had an illustrated article about Sarasate . . . now when was it that Holmes and Watson went to hear him play? The point is that both

<sup>4</sup> *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Jan. 28, 1939.



*Clinical Notes by a Resident Patient*

Greenhough Smith, the editor, and good old Watson, the contributor, strengthened each other's hands. There is the further case in point of the *Strand* articles on Ears in the issues of October and November, 1893, and Watson's well-synchronized reference<sup>5</sup> to Holmes's trifling monographs "Upon the surface anatomy of the human ear," which had been published in *The Anthropological Journal* about 1886.

. . . . .

Re-reading *John Barrington Cowles*, one of the tales in *The Captain of the Polestar*, etc., for a momentary anaesthesia, I find:

"... we visited the Isle of May, an island near the mouth of Forth, which, except in the tourist season, is singularly barren and desolate. Beyond the keeper of the lighthouse there are only one or two families of poor fisher-folk, who sustain a precarious existence by their nets, and by the capture of cormorants and solan geese."

Does this cast any further light on the mooted problem of the Politician, Lighthouse, etc.?<sup>6</sup> Was the Politician really a solan goose? . . . At any rate I submit that the Lighthouse was the one on the Isle of May . . . The etymology of cormorant is pleasant: *corvus marinus*, viz. sea-crow or sea-raven. . . . I think one of our next projects should be a discussion of corroborations and parallels to the S.H. theme found in the writings of his contemporary A.C.D.

. . . . .

All my life I have wondered just what was a "tide-waiter."<sup>7</sup> Lo and behold the other day I was reading some

<sup>5</sup>In *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box*, in the *Strand* for January, 1893.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. *The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger*.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*.



of Robert Burns's letters (in *Autograph Poems and Letters of Robert Burns in the Collection of R. B. Adam*, privately printed Buffalo, 1922). In August, 1795, he wrote to Mrs Riddell discussing the possibilities of a protégé of hers getting a job as a tide-waiter. The context makes it abundantly plain it meant a customs officer—one who waited for ships to come in with the tide. He wrote: "I think there is little doubt but that your interest, if judiciously directed, may procure a tide-waiter's place for your protégé, Shaw; but, alas, that is doing little for him! Fifteen pounds per an: is the salary; and the perquisites, in some lucky stations, may be ten more. . . . The appointment is not in the Excise; but in the Customs." I presume Burns was himself in the Customs at that time, hence Mrs Riddell applied to him for information.

. . . . .

I remember I said something once about there maybe not being a "jetty" at Portsmouth<sup>8</sup>. . . . In my associations a jetty is always something projecting: like what we call a pier. But I've been looking at the map of Portsmouth, in Muirhead's wonderful *Guide to England* (an absolutely indispensable textbook for every lover of English literature) and I see to my correcting that Portsmouth has all sorts of wharves, docks, piers, landings, whatever we might call 'em, named as "jetties." There are Sheer Jetty, Pitch House Jetty, South Jetty, etc., but obviously where JHW landed was *Troopship Jetty*, marked large as life on the map . . . I can almost see the *Orontes* there unloading . . . at the south end of the Royal Dock Yard, close to the Royal Naval College, and with a spur of railway track (line) running right down to the landing stage so the in-

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *A Study in Scarlet*: "I [Watson] was despatched, accordingly, in the troopship *Orontes*, and landed a month later on Portsmouth jetty, with my health irretrievably ruined."



valid could be helped aboard an L. & S.W. train and take no time at all to "gravitate" to the waiting "Cesspool" (one and  $\frac{3}{4}$  hrs. by fast train, says the *Guide*, 1920 edition).

I looked up the *Orontes* one time; because there *was* a sailing ship of that name, and if JHW had been aboard her he'd have been a lot later in arriving at Portsmouth. . . .

They also use the old term *Hard* for certain water frontages or dock areas: there is Portsea Hard, both a street and an embankment, adjoining the Royal Dock Yard; and Gosport Hard across the ferry . . . all sorts of delightful nomenclatures in Portsmouth: a ferry is called a "steam floating bridge."

Anyone who comes across Muirhead's *Guide* should snap it up . . . published by Macmillan, but I don't know if it's still in print; it is a treasury of interesting information and splendid maps and plans. There is a companion volume, same editor, *London and Its Environs*. Of course the small Bartholomew *Atlas of London and Suburbs* is classic for pre-blitz London.

. . . . .

Watson mentions in *The Adventure of the Norwood Builder* "the shocking affair of the Dutch steamship *Friesland*, which so nearly cost us both our lives." There was such a ship, and she was a beauty, a smart little Red Star Liner (registry surely Belgian rather than Dutch) . . . I crossed in her in one of her latest voyages, Phila to L'pool in September, 1910; I was on my way to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar; you know, those fellows who conspire to return the U.S.A. to colonial status. I even took a photo of her lovely forward lines, as seen from the bridge on a smiling day about the equinox of that September . . . I was enormously amused and pleased by a letter written to Mr. Edgar Smith by Jephro Rucastle (Lieut. Commander Richard W. Clarke of the U. S. Naval Reserve Midshipmen's



### *Sherlock Holmes the Man*

School in Chicago), who has constituted himself the Naval and Marine Committee of that Institute of Higher Studies, the Five Orange Pips. Rucastle has established that there was a bark *Lone Star* in the American Registry several years ago, and a *Matilda Briggs* owned by the Oriental Trading Company in 1873. He also claims there was a *Friesland* under Dutch registry, but he has as yet been unable to locate the bark *Sophy Anderson* or the bark *Gloria Scott* or the cutter *Alicia*. His conclusion is that there were three women in Watson's life not heretofore recognized, namely, Sophy, Gloria and Alicia, and that Watson deliberately changed the original names of the vessels in question to suit his own purpose. This would explain much.

. . . . .

Mr Edgar Smith is wrong, I think, in speaking of "the Town of Mycroft" as Sherlock Holmes's birthplace. It was actually the name of the old Yorkshire farmstead where the Holmes family had long been settled.—"My-croft," or "my enclosed farm or field"—what a delightful name and what a sturdy assertion of the individual! Holmes himself once told Stanley Hopkins that he, as well as his brother, was almost given a place name; Sherringford or Sherrinford, I think it was; for *Shearing-ford*, a ford in the stream where the sheep were sheared.

. . . . .

There was one other comment by Chief Inspector Hopkins that pleased me much. "Mr Holmes is still as keenly interested in minutiae as in the larger issues. The last time I talked with him on the telephone (a restricted number, but of course you know it: Eastbourne 221B) he was grouching about one of your American wireless programmes he had happened to pick up. With his French ancestry of course Mr Holmes is very critical of pronunciations; espe-



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cially, since Watson developed him into a wine-drinker, of the French vintages. He wanted me to ask if something couldn't be done to persuade that interlocutor *not* to call it 'Sawturn.' *So-tairn, So-tairn!* Mr Holmes kept repeating in that high strident voice."

. . . . .

What will really be a great moment will be Holmes's first ride in a plane—it seems extraordinary that he has never been up. But the Coastal Command has promised, when the time comes, to give him a flight up to Essex. He wants to see the lights come on again at Harwich—in memory of Von Bork.



## *Was the Later Holmes an Impostor?*

BY ANTHONY BOUCHER

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*Who was the man who returned to London in 1894 after a three-year hiatus in which the world—and Dr Watson—believed that Sherlock Holmes was dead? Was Holmes really killed when he fell over the cliff at the Reichenbach, and if he wasn't, was he ever quite the same man afterward? Mr Anthony Boucher, whose brilliant theory on the identity of the alleged Rudolf Hess remains unchallenged by official pronouncement today, has given new and specific vitality to the vague doubts expressed by an obscure Cornish boatman in this scholarly and provocative speculation on the person of the "later" Holmes.*

---

"I THINK, SIR, when Holmes fell over that cliff, he may not have killed himself, but all the same he was never quite the same man afterward."<sup>1</sup>

This remark of a Cornish fisherman has often been quoted as an astute critical comment; but it is quite possibly more than that. A careful examination of the available evidence leads one to the conclusion that it may well be a simple statement of fact: *He was not the same man.*

This conjecture has been anticipated by Eustace Portugal in his essay *The Holmes-Moriarty Duel*,<sup>2</sup> but Mr Portugal's treatment is almost entirely speculative. His star-

<sup>1</sup> Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bookman* (London), May, 1934.



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ting, if unlikely, theory as to the identity of the deuter-Holmes we may reserve for later consideration, while we study the sizable body of evidence indicating the existence of such a person.

First of all, what is the long-accepted story as we know it from the Canon?

In 1891 Holmes was preparing to destroy the evil empire of Professor Moriarty, the Napoleon of Crime. Moriarty had realized his intentions and threatened him with death. After several narrow escapes, Holmes wisely decided to retire to the Continent while Scotland Yard sprung the trap which he had set. On April 25, 1891, Holmes and Watson left England; on April 27, in Strasburg, they learned that Moriarty had escaped the police dragnet. On May 4, at the Reichenbach Fall, occurred the tragedy which plunged an empire into mourning.

There Watson was lured away by a false message, and Professor Moriarty and Sherlock Holmes met face to face on the narrow path. When Watson returned, the evidence at the scene convinced him and the experts whom he later brought to the spot that the genius of crime and the genius of detection had perished together.

In early April of 1894, three years later, Watson betook himself to the scene of the much-discussed murder of the Honourable Ronald Adair and contemplated it in a session of sweet silent thought. At that scene he performed a small kindness for an elderly, deformed bibliophile, who followed him home and revealed himself as Sherlock Holmes, returned to trap the last member of the Moriarty gang, who was the murderer of the Honourable Ronald.

When Watson had recovered from the first and last fainting spell of his life, he listened to one of the strangest narratives ever told. But before we consider the credibility of this explanation, let us first remark the notable differences



between the Holmes who plunged into the Reichenbach Fall and the Holmes who returned therefrom.

The protero-Holmes announced his intended retirement after the triumph over Moriarty. "Your memoirs will draw to an end, Watson, upon the day that I crown my career by the capture or extinction of the most dangerous and capable criminal in Europe."<sup>3</sup> The returned Holmes continues in practice for almost a decade after the complete annihilation of the Moriarty gang.

The original Holmes plays the violin frequently.<sup>4</sup> He takes Watson to hear Mme Norman Neruda at Hallé's concert<sup>5</sup> and Sarasate at St James' Hall,<sup>6</sup> explaining on the latter occasion, "I observe that there is a good deal of German music on the programme, which is rather more to my taste than Italian or French." The deuterio-Holmes never once plays the violin. *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone* (?1903) is patently a spurious work, and even the impossible violin-playing alibi in that tale could have been contrived as well by a layman as by a musician. In 1903, to be sure, Watson does remark, "As an institution I was like the violin,"<sup>7</sup> but there is no more definite evidence that the violin was ever touched after 1891. The deuterio-Holmes is apparently more interested in vocal music; he is delighted that "Carina sings tonight at the Albert Hall,"<sup>8</sup> but he is never described as attending any violin recitals. (Mme Carina is unknown to biographical dictionaries of music, but one's offhand assumption would be that her repertory was rather Italian than German.) The protero-

<sup>3</sup> *The Final Problem.*

<sup>4</sup> *A Study in Scarlet, The Sign of the Four, The Five Orange Pips, The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor, The Hound of the Baskervilles.*

<sup>5</sup> *A Study in Scarlet.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Red-Headed League.*

<sup>7</sup> *The Adventure of the Creeping Man.*

<sup>8</sup> *The Adventure of the Retired Colourman.*



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Holmes is extraordinary as a performer; he can play chords while holding the violin in his lap. The returned Holmes is equally extraordinary, but as a mental musicologist: he is able to write the definitive work on the polyphonic motets of Lassus purely by cerebral study of the scores. The two achievements, though alike remarkable,<sup>9</sup> seem to belong to different types of musical temperaments.

Holmes I was addicted to the use of cocaine and morphine. Holmes II uses no stronger stimulant than shag. In 1897, Watson does observe, "For years I had gradually weaned him from that drug mania which had threatened once to check his remarkable career . . . but I was well aware that the fiend was not dead but sleeping."<sup>10</sup> This is, however, only Watson's conjecture based upon Holmes's drawn look and brooding eyes; the last direct evidence of the existence of the habit is Holmes's jesting remark in 1889, "I suppose, Watson, that you imagine that I have added opium-smoking to cocaine injections, and all the other little weaknesses on which you have favoured me with your medical views."<sup>11</sup> Watson himself would of course explain the abstinence after 1891 as the eventual result of his medical lectures, but is it likely that he succeeded in his conversion during the two years 1889-1891, while he was living apart from Holmes, when he had failed in the six years they spent together?

In a nameless year before 1888, the *ur*-Holmes knows off-hand that the three leading freelance spies in London are Oberstein, La Rothière, and Eduardo Lucas.<sup>12</sup> In 1895, Hugo Oberstein and Louis La Rothière are still in practice,

<sup>9</sup> See Harvey Officer, "Sherlock Holmes and Music," in *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*.

<sup>10</sup> *The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter*.

<sup>11</sup> *The Man with the Twisted Lip*.

<sup>12</sup> *The Adventure of the Second Stain*.



along with the newcomer Adolph Meyer (Lucas having been murdered in the former case) ; but Holmes is forced to appeal to Mycroft for their names when he needs a list of possible dealers in stolen papers.<sup>13</sup>

To sum up, there disappeared in 1891 an able violinist, addicted to drugs, well-versed in spies, and ready to retire. There returned in 1894 a theoretical musicologist, free from narcotic vices, ignorant of spies, and eager to continue the profession of detective.

This is sufficient evidence to make us suspicious of the story which Holmes redivivus tells Watson of his escape from the Fall, and a careful examination of that story confirms our suspicions. It is so feeble a yarn, in fact, that even Watson might have spotted discrepancies under less emotional circumstances.

What is its essence? Moriarty went over the Fall alone, thanks to Holmes's knowledge "of baritsu, or the Japanese system of wrestling." Holmes then decided to let the world think him dead, so that the remnants of the Moriarty gang might be tempted to expose themselves. At great peril, he climbed up the almost sheer cliff, so that no footprints would reveal his escape, and lay concealed on a ledge while Watson and the Swiss experts examined the scene. After they had left, he narrowly escaped death from rocks hurled upon him from above by an aide of Moriarty's, whom he recognized as Colonel Sebastian Moran. With great difficulty, he regained the path, struck across the mountains, and was lost to the world. He spent the intervening three years largely in Tibet under the name of Sigerson and eventually returned to England, pausing on the way for assorted researches, and timing his arrival, with extraordinary precision, to coincide exactly with the crime of Colonel Moran.

The physical details of the escape, as he relates them, are

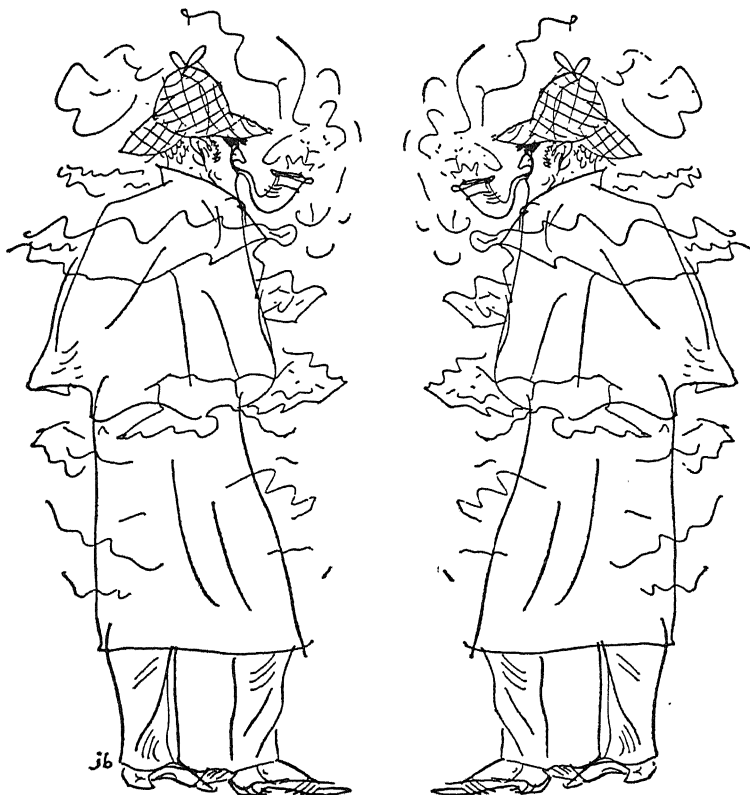
<sup>13</sup> *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans.*



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perhaps barely possible. He does say, "With my face over the brink, I saw him fall for a long way." The resultant print of his prone body in the moist earth should have betrayed his escape to the Swiss experts, but it is conceivable that Watson's similar imprint exactly overlay his.

But the time element of his narrative stamps it as unquestionably false. In *The Final Problem*, we have Watson's statement that the trip from Meiringen to the Reichenbach Fall takes two hours uphill and one hour down. Holmes and Watson leave Meiringen in "the afternoon," which cannot mean earlier than one o'clock; we shall see





shortly that it must have been closer to two. They arrived at the Fall, then, at four; and Watson leaves, allowing for his awed inspection of the Fall and his conversation with the bearer of the false message, around four fifteen. His trip to Meiringen and back adds another three hours, so that he discovers the tragedy at a quarter past seven.

In the latitude of Meiringen ( $46^{\circ} 45' N$ ), the sun sets on May 4 at about seven ten, with slight variations for local standard time. When Watson leans over the brink, "it had darkened since I left, and now I could only see here and there the glistening of moisture upon the black walls, and far away down at the end of the shaft the gleam of broken water." Watson makes a careful study of the scene and of Holmes's note and leaves at about seven thirty. It is probably quite dark by then; night comes quickly in the high mountains.

Now it is highly unlikely that "experts," who, as Watson informs us, examined the ground, were on call in "the little village of Meiringen" on a May evening. But even granting the deuterio-Holmes's assertion that this examination took place on the same day, the experts could not have reached the site in less than three hours after Watson left to summon them—in other words, at ten thirty. It would take them at least half an hour to form their "inevitable and totally erroneous conclusions." Holmes cannot have been left alone, then, before eleven o'clock, by which time he has been lying on the ledge for almost seven hours.

It is therefore some time after eleven when Holmes recognizes Colonel Sebastian Moran as the rock-throwing confederate. Conceivably Moran's "thin, projecting nose" and "high, bald forehead" might have been recognizable in silhouette at night, but Holmes describes "a man's head against the darkening sky." In short, that sky had been darkening from seven fifteen until some minutes after eleven—a meteorological phenomenon surely deserving



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some Holmesian contribution to the literature of the subject.

Holmes's mental processes at the time of Moriarty's death are nearly as remarkable as the Joshuan episode of the sun in the night-time. We may pass over the absurd notion, which he confesses he himself rejected, of creating false tracks by reversing his boots—a trick that is common enough practice among horsethieves, but is somewhat impractical here in view of the shape of the human foot. Moriarty, of course, might be suspected of having a cloven hoof, but hardly Holmes. More serious is the thought which, he claims, occurred to him "before Professor Moriarty had reached the bottom of the Reichenbach Fall." "I knew," he says, "that Moriarty was not the only man who had sworn my death. There were at least three others whose desire for vengeance upon me would only be increased by the death of their leader."

But the *ur*-Holmes, in telling Watson in Strasburg of Moriarty's escape, had announced, "They have secured the whole gang with the exception of him." "The trial of the Moriarty gang left two of its most dangerous members, my own most vindictive enemies, at liberty"; but Holmes could not have known that before the trial, and even before he had seen Colonel Moran against the darkening sky. (Almost as curious as the behavior of the sun is the Colonel's restraint in not attacking Holmes during the three hours while Watson went for help.)

Holmes's purported motive in going underground and allowing Watson to believe him dead was to trap the remaining Moriartists. But his own account makes nonsense of that motive; the one person, aside from Mycroft, who knew that he was certainly not dead, who had seen him alive after the destruction of Moriarty, was the new chief of the gang, Colonel Sebastian Moran.

Walter Klinefelter has pointed out yet another error in



the tale of the returned, though without realizing its significance.<sup>14</sup> The deutero-Holmes asserts that he "paid a short but interesting visit to the Khalifa at Khartoum" in 1894; but at that time "Khartoum had been destroyed by the Khalifa's orders and . . . Omdurman was then his capital."

We now have sufficient evidence to acknowledge at least the possibility of strict fact in the observation of the Cornish fisherman. But if the man who appeared in 1894 was not Sherlock Holmes, who was he?

Eustace Portugal suggests that the impostor was none less than Professor Moriarty, but his evidence amounts to hardly more than the fact that the mathematician was also tall and thin. This solution, though pleasingly outrageous, has little else to recommend it.

What qualities must the deutero-Holmes possess? He must have a pronounced physical resemblance; make-up might account for his deceiving Watson at first, but hardly in later years when the two resumed the intimacy of 221B. He must have a mind not too far below the level of Holmes's own; for though his introductory explanation is a clumsy farrago, his later adventures include such impeccably Holmesian achievements as those narrated in *The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez*, *The Problem of Thor Bridge*, and *His Last Bow*. (It is probable that the pure effort of playing Holmes gradually raised him almost to the stature of the original, even as film juveniles chosen for their profiles often become actors by sheer dint of acting.) And he must be acceptable to Mycroft, as impossible to deceive as the original Sherlock would have been, since Mycroft keeps the Baker Street rooms ready for him and later collaborates with him in *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*.

Adherents of Father Knox's heresy which suggests that

<sup>14</sup> Walter Klinefelter, *Ex Libris A. Conan Doyle: Sherlock Holmes*.



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Mycroft was early an ally at once of Sherlock and of Moriarty<sup>15</sup> may place their own interpretation upon this last clause; but to the orthodox its meaning seems evident. Mycroft needed Sherlock, not only for himself but for England. It was essential, with the remnants of the Moriarty gang and such spies as Oberstein and La Rothière still at large, that there should be two Holmeses in London—not only the brilliantly inert Mycroft, but the vigorously ert Sherlock.

So Mycroft saw to it that there should be a Sherlock Holmes. He found a cousin, markedly similar to the lost brother and possessed of some of the intellectual attainments characteristic of the Vernet strain of blood. He would be capable of playing the role of Sherlock reasonably well on his own, and if need be, he could always call upon Mycroft (as indeed he did in *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*). The three *Wanderjahre*, 1891-1894, were doubtless spent, not in Tibet nor in the ruins of Khartoum, but in the Pall Mall lodgings opposite the Diogenes Club under the careful tutelage of Mycroft, with visits (no doubt in disguise) to the empty lodgings in Baker Street, where files and scrapbooks might be consulted and memorized. The Adair murder provided the perfect moment for the resurrection, and Sherlock Holmes once more walked the streets of London.

The name of this close relative may well have been, originally, Sherrinford Holmes. Vincent Starrett has published a facsimile<sup>16</sup> of a page from an early notebook containing the first Holmesian jottings, which include this name—perhaps one which Watson had heard mentioned by young Stamford, who introduced him to Holmes.

If this name is correct, it suggests the answers to two un-

<sup>15</sup> Ronald A. Knox, "The Mystery of Mycroft," in *Baker Street Studies*.

<sup>16</sup> *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. Doyle (*op. cit.*, p. 75) gives the name as Sherringford, but this may well be a typographic error.



solved problems. In the first place, if this cousin has the talented Vernet blood and is named Holmes, it indicates that "the sister of Vernet, the French artist," was Holmes's *paternal* grandmother. (Though Sherrinford might be a brother; Watson had known Holmes for nine years before he learned that his friend had even one brother, so the existence of another is not impossible.)

In the second place, it provides a new explanation of the source of the analytical, if erroneous letters which appeared in *The Times* "over the signature of an amateur reasoner of some celebrity" in 1890 and in the *Daily Gazette* "over the signature of a well-known criminal investigator" in 1892, in connection with the cases, respectively, of *The Lost Special* and *The Man with the Watches*.<sup>17</sup> These characteristically Holmesian epistles may mark the maiden flights in deductive reasoning of Sherrinford Holmes, while a partly illegible signature, combined with their subject matter and unmistakable style, caused the respective editors to attribute them to Sherlock Holmes. (It is to be noted that the second of these letters was published in March or April of 1892, when Sherlock Holmes was either in Tibet or at the foot of the Reichenbach Fall, but when Watson's definitive account of his death had not yet appeared.)

If a copy of these remarks reaches Sussex, I trust it may please that elderly bee-keeping gentleman who occasionally calls himself Mr Mycroft. The unmasking of his deception can do no harm now, but only bring him fresh honor. It is wonderful enough to be born a Sherlock Holmes; it is surely an even greater feat to achieve the approximate level of Sherlock when born simply Sherrinford.

<sup>17</sup> For the text of these extra-canonical narratives, with arguments for their subsumption into the canon, see *Letters from Baker Street*.



## *Sherlock Holmes in the News*

BY CHARLES HONCE

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*The great news services, in discriminating between what should go out over its wires and what should not, are concerned with the inherent newsworthiness of the material at issue, and do not countenance merely fictional happenings or merely fictional people. It is significant, therefore, that Sherlock Holmes should have been so much in the headlines of late, and that his ability to hold his place there is due to his own vitality, and not to any trumped-up tale such as the one that might have been written about his having macerated Victor Trevor's bull-terrier in the ankle. It was, of course, the other way around, as such things should be; and we are indebted to Mr Charles Honce, of the Associated Press, for his realism in treating Holmes's newsworthiness in the sensible and literate manner in which it should be treated.*

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SHERLOCK HOLMES HAS BEEN in retirement now for a good many years, and his status as a human being, myth or legend is nebulous at the best and growing hazier by the hour—nevertheless the old gentleman still is grabbing newspaper headlines in a big way, even in war days.

In fact, his name probably gets into the prints more frequently nowadays than it ever did in the London gaslight era when he was unraveling those little problems for good Doctor Watson to pass on to an anxiously waiting public.



No report has yet been heard from a certain bee farm in Sussex, but someone surely must have sent Sherlock a copy of the *Boston Globe* of September 13, 1942, screaming in half-inch headlines:

WALTHAM SHERLOCK HOLMES FAN  
STARTS CLAMOR FOR NEW MYSTERY

Or, the paper with the equally big headline:

COMPOSER HARVEY OFFICER  
SETS SHERLOCK HOLMES TO MUSIC

Or, these, among others:

SHERLOCK HOLMES STILL LIVES  
SAY BAKER STREET IRREGULARS

DR WATSON WAS WOMAN, IN  
OPINION OF AUTHOR REX STOUT

I've had a hand in much of this newspaper notice, I may as well confess, because I found out long ago that American newspapers like to print stories about the great detective and that the public likes to read them. So I never have passed up an opportunity to push out a "news story" about Sherlock whenever I could find a spot peg on which to hang it.

The reader response to this material continually amazes me; evidently many persons still believe, as we do, that Sherlock Holmes is a real person.

This is not to be wondered at since, as Howard Haycraft has pointed out, "countless troubled letters have been addressed with appealing faith to 'Mr Sherlock Holmes, 221B, Baker Street, London,' " and even to Sussex. Likewise, the legend of Holmes's reality is kept alive by numerous Sherlock Holmes societies, by the fact that a railway locomotive has been named after him, and by movements frequently started to erect a statue to his memory.



These little stories of mine certainly must have played their part in the innocent deception, going out as they do to hundreds of Associated Press newspapers, and reaching, I like to believe, a reading public of untold millions. In them I always have treated Holmes as a living person.

The response, I repeat, has been astonishing; and once in a while I get into an argument. One was with Edgar Smith, editor of the volume you have in your hands. It will illustrate perfectly the degree of his fanaticism. Back in 1937 I opened a story in this fashion:

NEW YORK, April 17—(AP)—The fiftieth birthday of one of the best-known men of modern times will be celebrated this year.

Curiously, there are no memorials to him in existence; he has never been honored by a learned society; there even is some doubt as to whether he is alive today. Nevertheless, his name is a household word throughout the world. His features are as familiar as those of the Statue of Liberty.

The man is Sherlock Holmes.

Actually, he is more than fifty. If, as some contend, he still is tending his bees in Sussex or pondering some esoteric problem in his lodging at 221B, Baker Street, London, he must be in his middle eighties at least.

But, as it was in 1887 that the world first came to know of his activities through the pen of an impecunious physician, Dr A. Conan Doyle, fifty years will serve well enough as a birthday anniversary for one who remains so perennially young. [*Etc., etc.*]

Mr Smith wrote to say that he liked the story but that I had made one very grievous error. I had written, he noted, that Holmes was "one of the best-known men of modern times."

The fact is, Smith stated with finality: "Holmes is THE best-known man of modern times." And I'm sure he believes it.

Then, the late Carolyn Wells also took me to task be-



cause in another story I had recorded the name of Doyle's second novelette as *The Sign of the Four*.

The correct title, she maintained, was *The Sign of Four*; and she sent me a clipping from one of her books to prove it, intimating that I had made another world-shaking error.

In return, I sent her a clipping from another tome plainly showing that *The Sign of the Four* was correct. She wasn't convinced and took up the subject with Christopher Morley, whose answer only added to the confusion.

Eventually, she conceded that the first complete printing of the story in *Lippincott's Magazine* for February, 1890, contains the extra "the" in the title, but only after she had acquired not one, but two copies of this rare and valuable publication.

As this dissertation already has become a rambling affair, I might as well append some of the Carolyn Wells correspondence since it so aptly illustrates her trait of tracing a matter down to the last comma, and also because it has some interesting side comments, including one detective story writer's opinion of another's product:

[Jan. 31, 1939:] I wish you had sent the Ms. to me for proof reading, as Mark Sullivan does. I don't like to criticize, but I am a crank on printers' errors, and it broke my heart to see *The Sign of the Four*, and I cried when I saw Edgar Allen Poe, twice!

[Feb. 4, 1939:] I've just had a letter from C. Morley regarding the Doyle book.

He makes a number of statements that contradict your ideas and mine and, apparently, Morley's own.

So I decided to seek internal evidence. I thought I'd read the book again, but I just couldn't. It is the dullest, stupidest story in the world. But I skimmed it, and my copy, which is Lippincott, 1901, has *The Sign of Four* as a title, and as page headings. It has but few references to the phrase in question, and they are not all alike.

The sign of the four (with no capitals), appears on pages 38, 62 and 86.



*Sherlock Holmes in the News*

The sign of four (no capitals), on page 270.

And a garbled sentence on page 276, which makes nothing. Mr Morley winds up thus:

"The whole matter is now hopelessly, delightfully and permanently confused. Long may it so remain."

Personally, I think Conan Doyle didn't care much which phrase was used, and probably dug it out of the book for a title, after finishing his least admirable volume.

Anyway, I've lost interest in it, and I'm sorry I roused such a tempest in a teapot. . . .

You make me very happy sending me a cut from your Doyle book.

Because I do that sort of thing, even out of good books, and my friends think I am scum of the earth. But shall we be the slaves of our books, or they of us!

[Feb. 15, 1939:] Lippincott's are sending me *The Sign of Four* in old magazine form, but I fear, not the board covers.

[Feb. 24, 1939:] My magazine from Lippincott's has a paper cover, and the name is *The Sign of the Four*, though my book, published by Lippincott's, is *The Sign of Four*. I think nobody cares how it was worded, and I don't care as much as I did, myself.

[Oct. 4, 1939:] I have acquired another copy of *The Sign of the Four*, Lippincott's Magazine edition. It has no covers, but by the grace of God the backstrip has remained intact, with title and date; and the pages are immaculate. (I don't know why I want it!)

Probably my biggest spate of mail came after I had related in a newspaper article on Sept. 12, 1942, that a new Sherlock Holmes tale had been found but that Doyle's executors and family were going to keep it under lock and key because they considered it an "inferior" work.

Some rumors of this mysterious story had been tantalizing Irregulars for weeks but no solid fact was available. So, the London office of The Associated Press was cabled to look into the matter. It came back with the first real story, which I sent out embroidered with tidings of the hulla-



baloo that had been stirred up by Sherlock Holmes admirers on this side of the Atlantic.

The story mentioned that P. M. Stone of Waltham, Mass., a 22-carat Holmes fan and a member of both the Baker Street Irregulars and the Speckled Band, Boston's Sherlockian fraternity, was the first man on this continent to get scent of the tale. That is why the Boston *Globe*, playing the local angle, gave birth to its headline about a Waltham man's agitation.

Because my name happened to be attached to the story, I immediately began getting telephone calls and letters from all over the country, demanding further facts, inquiring how permission could be obtained for magazine publication, and a variety of other questions which I couldn't answer. I passed the buck promptly to Edgar Smith, who still is stewing over the subject.

The keenest letter, I think, came from a kid in Brooklyn





who asked to what address he and his boy pals might direct a bombardment of letters and postcards to get the story released.

He added, in a postscript: "I'd like to join the Baker Street Irregulars, if possible."

The application also was passed on to Mr Smith. Maybe the Irregulars will blossom out with a junior branch some day.

The blaring headlines that Sherlock Holmes still lives appeared in many newspapers over a story written in December, 1934, just after the first meeting of the Baker Street Irregulars at that fabulous dinner at Christ Cella's.

I penned the yarn in spite of the fact that I was mad because I wasn't invited. My long-time friend, Vincent Starrett, the Sherlock Holmes specialist, had come down from Chicago for the momentous occasion; and while I hungered for a hint to come along, it didn't materialize, and I had to dope out an account of the orgy from what Starrett told me afterwards.

It was not until recently that I finally learned why I couldn't have gone anyway. The story, as I so belatedly learned, was that Christopher Morley had printed a Sherlock Holmes cross-word puzzle in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, inviting solutions, and proposing a dinner to those who answered correctly.

And so to that dinner went only those who managed to turn in a perfect score—no mean accomplishment to judge from some of Morley's later cross-word offerings. At the time I didn't know anything about the cross-word puzzle angle and I probably couldn't have solved the damned thing if I had. Later, Edgar Smith did the handsome thing and brought me into the circle of the faithful after reading one of my AP tales, so they well have served their purpose.

Incidentally, I have another interesting and untold yarn about that dinner at Cella's. It concerns a dear friend,



the late Edmund Pearson, that gentle soul who also was the kingpin of murder writers; and I am sure he would not mind my telling it here.

Some years ago—in 1935—Pearson contributed an article to the New York *Herald Tribune Books* called “Say, Who D’ye Think Done This, Anyhow?”; and I reprinted it in a little Christmas book in 1942. In it are related the misadventures of a Pearson relative who had just come from that first Sherlock Holmes dinner and who couldn’t solve an obviously plain case of robbery in the Pearson apartment.

As a necessary preliminary to the climax, here is the section of the Pearson article relating to the BSI affair. It is worth preservation in its own right as an authentic Sherlock Holmes recording:

A resolute attempt to organize a brotherhood of amateur Sherlocks was made last winter by founding the Baker Street Irregulars. A group of genial literary gentlemen dined and wined and drank the health of Sherlock Holmes and all his crew.

A friend of mine, Mr Laurence Paine, of Boston, who was bidden to this feast, sat in ecstasy and gazed upon the distinguished company. There, in one room, were Messrs Christopher Morley, William Rose Benét, Gene Tunney and Elmer Davis. Later came Mr William Gillette, the great impersonator of Sherlock Holmes. And, in the midst, sat Mr Alexander Woollcott, the eminent criminologist, in a cloak and a fore-and-aft cap. At considerable self-sacrifice, since the room was warm, Mr Woollcott wore these picturesque garments all through dinner. He had also, he announced, come to the restaurant in a hansom cab, which, to the regret of all, could not be driven into the banquet room.

Now, mark the sad irony of things. Mr Paine, full of first-class detective lore, departed from the feast to dine on the morrow with his children in an apartment in West Twelfth Street. The apartment was borrowed from a brother-in-law who, with his family, was out of town for a day or so. The dinner was sent in by a caterer.

Mr Paine found the front and only door blocked by chairs



and a couch. He found an open window and a ladder leading to the roof next door. He found signs of revelry and traces of whisky drunk and cigarettes smoked. He found bureau drawers pulled out and upset and the silver gone from the sideboard. In fact he walked into enough obvious and unmistakable signs of burglary to fill a text book on criminology. To all these he remained serenely unconscious, and told his children that leaving the apartment this way was Uncle Jack's idea of humor.

The reckoning came next day when he had to confront the perturbed Uncle Jack, the janitor of the house and three policemen. One of the latter insisted on examining Mr Paine vigorously as to his whereabouts the night of the raid. When the Bostonian blushing admitted that he had been attending a dinner in honor of the great detective of fiction, a broad and tolerant smile spread over the policeman's face. Said this literate cop:

"Ah, well, you can't have Sherlock Holmes without you have Dr Watson, too!"

Innocently, I sent a copy of my book to Laurence P. Dodge of Newbury, Mass., Pearson's brother-in-law, and also a charter member of the Irregulars. Thereupon, he wrote me:

"I was greatly amused by 'Say, Who D'ye Think Done This, Anyhow?' in which I figure as Laurence Paine, the prize boob. When that Sherlock Holmes cross-word puzzle appeared in *The Saturday Review*, Edmund and I each sent in a solution. To my great joy, mine was correct and his wasn't; hence I was bidden to that now legendary dinner at Cella's while he had to stay at home. I don't think he ever forgave me for making the grade.

"Several weeks later, my children being in New York for Christmas we did have our dinner in my brother-in-law's apartment as described, though there was no ladder nor was I ever questioned by the police. Although the [BSI] dinner was in honor of Holmes and no one present, at least not I, ever professed any detective skill, Edmund



pretended to be greatly amused by the event and, for his article, embroidered the affair into its present form."

Well, as you can see, there is news in all these singular goings-on—although a lot of it gets on the screwy side; and I've related it for newspaper readers to the best of my ability as the pieces came to hand.

Just the other day I flagged another item. One of those solid Holmes men who solved Chris Morley's cross-word puzzle and thus got a seat at the first BSI banquet board was Harvey Officer, once a music teacher, now in advertising. He's always well primed for the meetings, having started the ball rolling with a whimsey on "Sherlock Holmes and Music" at the 1934 session.

His contribution in 1942 was an anthem, "The Road to Baker Street," which members sang with great gusto to the tune of "Mandalay."

That made such a hit that Gasogene Morley phoned Officer just two weeks before the 1943 festivities to propose that he write a "symphony or a sonata" on Sherlock Holmes for the occasion.

"Well," as Mr Officer dryly observed later, "one doesn't dash out a symphony or a sonata on any subject in a couple of weeks."

Nevertheless, under the spur that Sherlock Holmes always gives to his more rabid idolaters, Officer manfully went to work and turned up at the affair with two movements of a "Baker Street Suite," and, what is more, proceeded to pound them out on a piano to valorous fiddle accompaniment.

The business seems to have got into his blood in a big way, because, at odd minutes since, he completed the suite and turned out thirteen additional songs, which recently were published privately for the Irregulars.

When my copy arrived I tapped Officer for a story, and thus Sherlock Holmes got into the public prints again, and



Harvey Officer's name, much to his surprise and maybe regret, got into the headlines. So long as papers like to print these things I'll continue to write them.

I am glad to report—in conclusion—that with each of my Holmes news stories have gone out a flock of pictures so that every newspaper morgue in the country is plentifully supplied with likenesses of the Great Profile, ready for instant use in the event the Sussex bee keeper finally cashes in—an event, happily, that is not expected for many years—if ever.

In this collection is a picture Frederic Dorr Steele was kind enough to draw for The Associated Press—a new likeness of the detective, which, while purposely exaggerated, is one of the best, in my opinion, that ever came from his pen.

Finally, if you're interested in taking a gander at one of the news stories to which I have been referring, here's a sample—the one about the new manuscript:

### *A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY*

NEW YORK, Sept. 12, 1942—(AP)—For years, Sherlock Holmes fanatics, who are not to be matched for wackiness on this earth, have lamented the fact there were no more of his adventures to read.

Hadn't good old Doc Watson mentioned a fairly long and mouth-watering list of cases in which the great detective had figured but about which no stories were to be found? Surely the devoted Watson must have recorded some of them and they would come to light some day.

But nothing of the kind happened, and so when the Baker Street Irregulars got together for their annual harlequinades they perforce had to consider the Sacred Writings as a closed book. And, lacking new material to work on, their continual toying with the old finally led them into a land of whimsey that would have bemused even Sir James Barrie. One Irregular [Rex Stout] propounded the theory that Dr Watson was a woman and another [Wilbur K. McKee] opined Mr Pickwick and Sherlock Holmes were one and the same. The 1943 revelations promise to be even more incredible. [They were.]



## *Sherlock Holmes the Man*

That probably is why some of the more rational Irregulars constantly prayed that somewhere, sometime, another Sherlock Holmes tale would pop out of the blue—surely there had to be at least one more.

Well, to get back, as DeWitt Mackenzie would say, to our mutttons, it turns out that there is one more story. A. Conan Doyle wrote it several years before his death and then put it aside because he didn't think it was good enough to print. Happily, he didn't destroy it.

His son, Adrian, who discovered it, at first announced that it would not be published, but it's a fair guess that the clamor that is bound to arise from Sherlock Holmes addicts will tear it right out of his hands.

In fact, that clamor already has begun. Here's how it has progressed:

The first spine-tingling hint that another story existed appeared in a gossip column in the *London Star* on June 13.

Eventually that reference caught the eye of P. M. Stone of Waltham, Mass., a member of the Speckled Band, Boston's counterpart of the Baker Street Irregulars.

Mr Stone promptly exploded when he realized the import of the columnist's casual statement that the story was to remain in the limbo of Conan Doyle's papers.

Shaken, he Paul Revered the word to the Irregulars. Gasogene Christopher Morley blanched and dropped a valuable first edition. Rex Stout began muttering in his beard.

Out in Chicago, Sherlock Holmes's biographer, Vincent Starrett, likewise was bowled over by the sinister tidings of suppression and exclaimed in capital letters:

"IN GOD'S NAME, WHY?"

After his agitation had subsided somewhat, he managed to query:

"Can't the Irregulars do something?"

His plea reached the sympathetic ears of Edgar W. Smith of New York, Secretary of the Irregulars, who immediately dashed out a circular to all members about the report, which he unhesitatingly predicted would "rock the Sherlockian world to its foundations."

It rocked one Irregular (the present writer) to hustle an SOS to London for the real low-down. It resulted in the following news story by William King, a member of the London staff of the Associated Press:



*Sherlock Holmes in the News*

LONDON, Sept. 12—(AP)—“Most astounding, my dear Holmes!”

That probably would have been the reaction of faithful Doctor Watson to the revelation from the family of the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle that an unpublished Sherlock Holmes story had been discovered among some musty old papers left by the noted writer when he died twelve years ago.

The comment of the millions of devotees who have devoured every line of the Sherlock Holmes stories probably will be much more vocal, however, when they learn of the decision of Conan Doyle's son not to publish the discovery.

The story—“The Man Who Was Wanted”—was found by the author's son, Adrian Conan Doyle, in an old chest among ancient family documents—many of which pre-dated Sir Arthur.

On the envelope in which the manuscript was discovered, in the writing of the author's wife, was a note that he did not intend to have the story published because he did not consider it up to the standard set by the others in the vast Sherlock Holmes series.

“It is not up to scratch,” said his son, “and my father didn't want to run the risk of disappointing his admirers by putting out a story that he felt did not come up to par.”

Hesketh Pearson, biographer of Thomas Hardy, who is preparing a life of Sir Arthur, agreed that the story was “very feeble” and said Conan Doyle showed “good common sense” in withholding it from publication since it might have injured the reputation of the famous detective of Baker Street.

The opening scenes of the story in Holmes's quarters, said Pearson, are “quite as good as anything that Conan Doyle did, but the plot is weak.”

The tale, which runs six to seven thousand words, concerns the problem of finding a business executive who disappeared when he got into financial difficulties.

With Watson in amazed attendance Holmes solves the case by the simple expedient of showing a photograph of the man to his friends, neighbors and enemies and making those “remarkable, my dear sir!” deductions from their reactions.

Pearson has for the past year been studying Conan Doyle's writings, visiting his acquaintances and delving into his ancestry and heredity in preparation for writing the new biography. It was while Adrian Conan Doyle was working with



him in sorting out and studying his father's papers that the unpublished manuscript was discovered.

The existence of the story had not been suspected prior to its discovery. Adrian Conan Doyle has "very definite" plans for preserving the story despite the fact that it may never see print.

"I realize," he explained, "that there may be a great demand from Sherlock Holmes admirers to have the story published. In that case, the family might consent. I cannot say definitely, however, until my elder brother (Denis Conan Doyle) returns from America."

The story was written several years before Sir Arthur died, but the state of the paper would indicate, his son said, that it was not among the last of his Sherlock Holmes stories. It is in the same neat handwriting which characterized all his manuscripts.



## *The Dental Holmes*

BY CHARLES GOODMAN, D.D.S.

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*There are no facets to the daily lives and preoccupations of the great that can properly be classified as trivia. Samuel Johnson's eating habits were of world-shaking importance; Herbert Spencer's migraines influenced the whole trend of his synthetic philosophy; Thomas Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence was what it was because of what he was in the familiar course of his life and habits. It is not beside the mark, therefore, to dwell upon the oral hygiene of Sherlock Holmes in the light of its impact upon his career, and we must be grateful to Dr Goodman for revealing this communication from a fellow dental surgeon whose knowledge of the master was based, quite literally, on inside information.*

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BEING A LETTER written to Dr Goodman by Charles S. Wilson, D.D.S., of London, England, under date of November 5, 1942.

My dear Dr Goodman:

I trust you will forgive my failure to answer your letter of last year relative to my professional and personal relations with Mr Sherlock Holmes. As you know, an "East Wind" was blowing over our dear land with such fury that I thought I never would live to reply to your note. However, I had resolved that when I could bring myself





to do so, I would at last break my professional silence and make available some of the data pertaining to Holmes that I collected over the years. Fortunately, some of my old records were in a place safe from fire. I had plenty of time while in the air raid shelter at night to recall many of the experiences with Holmes, which might prove of interest to all of you over there. May I take this opportunity to thank you for the copy of Mr Harvey Officer's song "On the Road to Baker Street." During those long winter nights in the air raid shelter, we often sang those words from his song—"Nor shall Axis armies ever tread the stones of Baker Street." I am sure he will be pleased to learn that they helped to keep our spirits high during those terrible nights.

It was in the very early days of my career, about 1875, that an ascetic-looking young chap was referred to me for treatment by a former classmate at Cambridge. He had



been suffering for several days from an acute pulpitis. The nerve of his tooth was so inflamed that the pain was excruciating. I remarked that a patient suffering from such a toothache usually rouses me out of bed in the middle of the night, or else I find him pacing up and down in front of the office after a sleepless night. The strange young man replied very casually that he was too engrossed in perfecting the Sherlock Holmes test for human blood stains to apply for dental treatment. Later I was surprised to learn that he had deadened the pain with an occasional hypodermic injection of a 7% solution of cocaine. I am greatly inclined to believe that these frequent attacks of toothache may have started him off on the use of cocaine. I noticed that his fingers, and even his clothing, were stained with chemicals. He was very tense and irritable. But after I had applied a sedative to the aching nerve, he relaxed considerably. Then, very enthusiastically, he pointed out the importance of his blood-test in medico-legal work. Having majored in chemistry, I was naturally interested in this remarkable discovery. I plied young Holmes with many technical questions. Perhaps he detected some doubt in my mind, for he offered to demonstrate his theory in my laboratory. He applied the solutions to a bloodstained towel which had been in my hamper for several days. I was astounded by the simplicity and accuracy of the test.

Our mutual interest in chemistry later proved to be a bond of attraction between us. This interest was responsible for the saving of many of Holmes's teeth, for whenever he had developed some new test he would drop into my laboratory to tell me about it, and it was only on those occasions that I was able to coax him into the chair. After he moved to his Baker Street quarters which were quite near my Wimpole Street office, he used to drop in very frequently. How he disliked the drilling of his teeth! Who could blame him? Our methods then were quite crude and



painful as compared to the gentle refinements of modern dental science. He did not know the blessings of novocain anesthesia, nor the exhilarating joy of laughing gas analgesia which you American dentists are using so successfully today. At first I assumed that my new patient was a well-fixed young chemist with a bright future. Any thoughts that I might have entertained as to his financial assets were soon dissipated. He frankly confessed that his small income went mostly for lodgings and chemicals. However, I was so delighted at having acquired a patient with such a brilliant scientific mind that I did not object to his financial status. In fact, I took such an immediate liking to this strange young man that I often waived the fee entirely. Little then did I realize that this young man would exert a profound influence on the political and criminal history of many European countries.

It wasn't until later in our professional relationship that I learned from Holmes of his unusual calling. He was not a very talkative patient except on the subject of chemistry. I soon discovered that when he was in one of his dreamy moods he hardly heard what I said to him: even the lure of the test tube proved futile on such occasions. At other times he was very alert and communicative. He would astound my nurse and myself with his keen powers of observation. Quite often he would tell us more about the habits and idiosyncrasies of the patients in my reception room than we ourselves knew.

Holmes proved to be a very grateful and loyal patient. Eventually he insisted on making his own fees, in which matter he was extremely generous. On two occasions I received fees which were handsome indeed—after he had solved a mystery at some place up north called the Priory School, and again when he won a tidy sum on a horse named Silver Blaze at the races. Holmes referred his brother Mycroft to me, and through him I acquired as



## *The Dental Holmes*

patients some of the highest government officials in England. It was the indolent Mycroft who suggested the novel idea of a dentist calling upon his patients as does the physician.

I shall never forget that rainy day when Holmes came rather hurriedly into my office bleeding profusely from the lips. Dr Watson had been called out of town on a consultation, so he turned to me for aid. Examination revealed that the hemorrhage came from lacerations on the inner side of the left lip as well as from an empty canine socket. He remarked that his so-called "eye" tooth had been knocked out by a chap named Mathews in Charing Cross Station. He did not volunteer to give me any further details, and knowing Holmes's reticence I discreetly refrained from asking any embarrassing questions. I applied a splint to control the bleeding, gave him a drink of whiskey, and sent him home.

My patient returned the next day, accompanied by his friend, Dr Watson. In strict accordance with the ethics of his profession, Watson insisted that I follow through with my treatment. We both pulled Holmes's leg a bit about the incident. He took our joking in good spirit, but never uttered a word about the details of the encounter. I must admit that we were more than a bit curious. Of course, we in the dental profession know that under normal conditions his canine tooth could never have been easily "knocked out." Even the dental surgeon, equipped with specially devised forceps, must exert unusual leverage and force to remove that type of tooth. I am advised by one of my colleagues, who is also an official examiner of the Royal Boxing Commission, that in all his wide experience he never saw a normal canine knocked out in a boxing match. Therefore I am sure that your deduction that Holmes had pyorrhea is quite correct.

In restoring the missing tooth I was confronted with a



troublesome dental problem. Holmes insisted that I avoid any display of metal. He said, "Make me a bridge that even the keen eye of a Moriarty will fail to detect." I could not understand why he was so fastidious in this matter. It was not until after I had read Watson's story called, I think, *The Adventure of the Stock-Broker's Clerk*, wherein a chap named Hall Pycroft saw through the deception of the Pinner brothers by noting the "tooth stuffed with gold," that I realized what a hindrance a gold crown might prove to Holmes in view of the many disguises he was called upon to assume.

This incident was responsible for Dr Watson's becoming one of my patients. Watson's teeth were strong and well preserved, though somewhat worn down and abraded, particularly on one side where he was accustomed to hold his pipe. Like all army doctors he had an aversion to having his teeth cleaned. However, after his marriage he came regularly, no doubt at his wife's insistence. He always avoided any reference to any of Holmes's cases. I might say he was a typical English physician, very serious and dignified—so different from Holmes, who enjoyed having an occasional little joke at our expense.

I am always quite annoyed whenever I see the expression "Quick, Watson, the needle" in the newspapers, especially in cartoons and advertisements. On many an occasion I was strongly tempted to write an article for the papers refuting the general misconception in the mind of the public that Holmes was addicted to the use of cocaine. However, I was greatly relieved to read Mr Edgar Smith's very interesting and scientific paper in *The Saturday Review of Literature* back in 1939 ("Up from the Needle," I think it was called) which proved, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the brilliant criminologist was not a slave to the drug and that what he really enjoyed was sound wines and that other stuff that we squirt the water from the gasogene into.



## *The Dental Holmes*

Although I was always pleased to treat Holmes, I never looked forward with keen anticipation to the task of cleaning his teeth. After he had been working on a long and difficult problem the inner surfaces of his teeth were almost completely covered with the stain from the black shag tobacco he always smoked. He insisted he could not bother with such trifling details as brushing his teeth while on a case, as it diverted his mind from the problem at hand. I think he rather liked the process of having his teeth cleaned. He would close his eyes, lean back in the chair, and stretch out his long legs until they rested on the window sill. I am sure my nurse had a weakness in her heart for Holmes. She never rebuked him for soiling the edges of her snow-white curtains or for frequently breaking his appointments. When the papers featured a crime that baffled Scotland Yard we were certain that Holmes would not show up for quite a while.

To protect his front teeth from injury during those amateur boxing matches in which he often engaged—he told me once he had gone three rounds with Slogger McMurdo, who was really good—I constructed a soft rubber mouth protector. It proved so successful that Holmes referred many well-known boxers of that period to me to have those devices made and today they have become quite common. As you know, I first published that technique in the *British Dental Journal* many years ago.

One day a wabby, old seafaring man, in a green pea-jacket, hobbled into my reception room. He wheezed and coughed. After waiting a few minutes he stamped his foot impatiently. In a voice that could be heard throughout the entire office he shouted: "How long must an old man, suffering from a toothache, wait to be treated?" The patient in my chair very kindly relinquished his time for the poor old man. When I turned to treat the seaman I was astounded to see none other than Holmes himself standing



in the corner with a grin on his face. He apologized profusely for breaking into my routine so rudely, but confessed that my office was one of the few places in London where he could effect a change of costume without fear of detection. He had observed that my laboratory had a separate entrance leading to the next street. From that time on Holmes frequently used my laboratory to make his changes. I finally gave him a key to the rear entrance. I have seen<sup>1</sup> him made up as an Italian ecclesiastic in a black cassock, as a tottering old woman, and in many other unusual disguises. What an actor he would have made! One morning I surely thought my office had been burglarized. On entering the laboratory I was startled to find a complete burglar's kit lying on the floor near the safe where I kept my dental golds. Later in the day Holmes explained that he was brushing up on his safe-cracking technique in connection with a case concerned with a blackmailer he termed "the worst man in London."<sup>1</sup>

Once, while I was taking an impression of his mouth, he noticed that the dental plaster produced a very sharp model and set very rapidly. He asked me to purchase a barrel of the plaster and keep it in my laboratory for his use. I was perplexed as to what trick he had up his sleeve. I soon discovered that he was writing a monograph on the art of preserving footprints with plaster of Paris. One day just after it had stopped raining, he had me walk, jump and run in the muddy alley back of my laboratory. I became so interested that I helped him mix the plaster and pour the casts into my footprints. He very kindly gave me credit in his paper for my assistance in that piece of work. My laboratory was also used to conduct some of his chemical researches, particularly when he was working on the problem of dissolving the hydrocarbons.

<sup>1</sup> My colleague refers, undoubtedly, to *The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton*.



## *The Dental Holmes*

At times Holmes was very talkative and gay, particularly after he had solved a baffling crime. Although he was very susceptible to flattery and more than a bit conceited, he was big enough to admit his failures quite readily. He often spoke to me of certain aspects of his cases. Frequently he remarked, "Nothing clears up a case as much as stating it to someone else." I think I read that expression later in one of Watson's stories.<sup>2</sup> On one occasion I was bold enough to remind him tactfully of an instance where he had almost committed a colossal blunder by overlooking the dental aspect of a crime. Perhaps I was a bit chagrined because he did not apply for my professional advice. That was the adventure in which a young chap named McFarlane was accused of burning Jonas Oldacre, the Norwood Builder, to death. By a strange coincidence, I had constructed a denture for the stingy old architect. I waited anxiously for the shrewd detective to call upon me for my records to prove that the porcelain teeth from this plate would have to be present in the burnt embers, before the police could establish the *corpus delicti*. But the cunning Holmes fortunately solved the crime, as we all know, without my help. From that time on, however, he took serious note of the importance of teeth in crime detection. He insisted on using my electric porcelain furnace to burn extracted teeth to test the physical properties of the metallic fittings and to analyze the chemical content in the residue of burnt human and animal teeth. I furnished him from time to time with many facts about the human dental apparatus which he said would be incorporated some day in the book he was going to write on the "whole art" of detection.

I shall never forget that cold, bleak February evening, about 1894, when my bell rang repeatedly as I was just about to close my office. I was greatly surprised to usher

<sup>2</sup> Yes—*Silver Blaze*. Ed.



into the waiting room an elderly deformed gentleman with white hair and side-whiskers. He brushed past me very rudely, and threw an armful of books on the floor. Although he claimed to be in great pain he refused to enter my operating room for treatment until I had drawn the blinds and locked all the doors. He exacted a promise from me not to answer the bell if it should ring while he was being treated. When I had looked into the mouth of this old gentleman I received a great shock. I knew then that I was gazing into the mouth of my old friend and patient, Sherlock Holmes, whom we had given up for lost at the Reichenbach Fall three years before.

"Don't ask me any questions," he shouted, "but give me some relief from this terrific pain. I have waited patiently for weeks to get you alone in the office." Poor Holmes was in a terrible state of agitation. He was tired and worn out. His teeth were in a deplorable state of neglect.

"I shall have to forego the privilege of availing myself of your skilled attention until a certain criminal is apprehended," he stated. "Please refer me to a worthy colleague of yours in the country. It would be too risky to be seen in this vicinity again. When this case is completed I promise faithfully to devote as much time as you require to rehabilitate my mouth. I know it will require considerable attention."

He insisted that I let him out by the rear entrance and keep the office lit for an hour thereafter. I referred him, in case of emergency, to my friend and classmate, S. Harrington Jones, who practiced in Brighton. I received no word from Holmes until after the notorious Colonel Sebastian Moran had been apprehended. I am sure he never again uttered a complaint against our technique of extraction after enduring the removal of one of his molar teeth by a native dentist in Tibet.

Although Holmes was exceptionally busy from 1894 to



## *The Dental Holmes*

1903, he nevertheless kept his promise to pay more attention to his neglected teeth.

A slight heart condition compelled me to ease up on my work about this time. My famous patient would never permit my young associate to treat him. When I retired from practice he requested that I retain the privilege of caring for his teeth. Incidentally, Holmes and I both retired about 1904. It was always a great pleasure to get into harness again when I received a call from Sussex Downs. When I flatly refused to accept any remuneration for my services, he very generously presented me with a beautiful snuff box, with an amethyst set in its cover.

Holmes's rheumatism became so acute along about this time that Dr Watson advised the removal of all his infected teeth. It was during that trying period of adjustment to the use of artificial dentures that he remarked, "Now I can appreciate why poor Dundas threw his false teeth at his wife after every meal."<sup>3</sup> This interesting case, which Holmes cited to Watson as an example of the "unnaturalness of the commonplace," involved a bit of leg-pulling, I'm afraid, for you and I know that even today, with all the skill of modern dental science, we cannot construct a set of artificial teeth that would withstand such violent and frequent abuse.

I insisted, in any event, that Holmes remain in my London home until thorough healing had taken place and all the annoying adjustments were made. Before leaving he gave my wife a lovely cameo which he had brought back from Rome many years ago, and it was with a twinge of regret that I bade my famous patient good-bye. Before he left he invited me to spend a fortnight at his bee farm. I went down to see him, of course, and we spent many hours together talking about the old days. He told me about

<sup>3</sup> My colleague refers here to the newspaper story Holmes mentioned to Watson in *A Case of Identity*.



*Sherlock Holmes the Man*

many of those unpublished adventures which Watson was always hinting at. Health permitting, I shall try to record some of those tales from memory and send them on to you during the coming year.

Please convey my warmest greetings to the members of the Baker Street Irregulars. I trust that your famous club will continue to keep fresh the memory of the great master for many years to come. Believe me, I am

Faternally yours,

(signed) Charles S. Wilson, D.D.S.



## *The Other Friendship: A Speculation*

BY P. M. STONE

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*Whether we look upon the affinity as that of a Damon and a Pythias, or as that of a Johnson and a Boswell, the friendship of Holmes and Watson stands symbolic for all the ages of what a friendship should be—the mutual giving and receiving of the things each partner to it has to offer and the things his inner needs require. When these specifications are met, it is no reflection upon the fastness or the fulness of a friendship that those who enjoy it should themselves have other friends. It may well be that Watson found escape, at times, in intercourse with such erstwhile cronies as young Stamford and Tadpole Phelps and Bob Ferguson, or even with Dr Anstruther and Dr Jackson. And it is not unlikely that Sherlock Holmes likewise was inclined to seek variety—and shall we say relief?—in intellectual converse on the higher plane with someone whose capacities and inclinations were just a little closer to his own. Mr P. M. Stone dwells thoughtfully and persuasively upon this possibility, and he gives us, indeed, to ponder.*

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ONE WONDERS AT TIMES, on closer scrutiny of the Holmes and Watson chronicles devoted to their joint investigations, if the renowned lodgers at 221B, Baker Street had, on occasions, any very friendly contact with their professional confreres.

It is, indeed, somewhat amazing that we have not been



presented with a clearer and more detailed record of those "off duty" periods when these two friends sought together, or within their separate spheres, some relaxation and entertainment, or perhaps the stimulating companionship of some notable individual whose character and attainments offered peculiar attraction.

My present aim, therefore, is to lend probability, even though it may be unaccompanied by final proof, to the theory that Sherlock Holmes and John Evelyn Thorndyke during the course of their contemporary careers were not wholly unaware of one another's professional activities.

I would even suggest, not too presumptuously perhaps, that these eminent foes of the London criminal world of a half century ago actually met upon certain occasions and even exchanged views upon celebrated cases which were, plainly, beyond the resources of Scotland Yard.

At this stage I would point to a strong similarity of mental equipment as between Superintendent Miller, who frequently came to Thorndyke for advice, and our good friend, Lestrade, with whose ineptitudes we are all, I presume, somewhat more familiar.

Let us first give scrutiny to the important time element. Thorndyke, who has already become recognized in his chosen field of medical jurisprudence, was, we may judge, some fifteen years younger than Holmes, since he "took chambers" in The Temple some time after 1900—well towards the date of Holmes's retirement.

We learn from *The Red Thumb Mark*, Dr Jervis' initial chronicle of his distinguished confrere's exploits (1907), that Thorndyke had relinquished his post at the South London hospital some four or five years prior to the opening of this famous Hornby case and had engaged in what he modestly termed "a very curious assortment of miscellaneous practice." We know, too, that he was aided during these preliminary investigations by the invaluable



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Polton, who was to play an important role as artificer in all of the subsequent problems. Polton is, indeed, to make use of a trite phrase, a dynamic figure in the Thorndyke gallery, and his "crinkly" visaged presence in the King's Bench Walk domicile adds immeasurably to the charm and distinguished flavor of his creator's\* engaging narratives.

But we must hold to the main line of inquiry and ascertain, if possible, some trace of an association, either direct or implied, between Baker Street and the precincts of The Temple.

If, as it now appears, Thorndyke started practice about 1902 or 1903, we recall that Holmes was then engaged upon the following cases: *The Adventure of the Illustrious Client*; *The Adventure of the Priory School*; *The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier*, and *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone*, to name but a few of those among the later Watson chronicles. (The dates, by the way, have been authoritatively established by that eminent, highly regarded authority, Mr H. W. Bell.)

Still later we arrive at *The Adventure of Lion's Mane* (1907) chronicled by the Master himself, following his Sussex retirement; this case having unfolded the very same year that Dr Jervis reported *The Red Thumb Mark* episodes.

One finds in the *Lion's Mane*, by the way, some significant passages relating to a marine growth, *Cyanea capillata*, possessing marked lethal qualities. Can it be more than a coincidence that both Holmes and Thorndyke had made special study of this branch of science? Holmes gained first knowledge of the "stinger" in J. G. Wood's *Out of Doors*, but I like to believe also that he made further advance in his quest through consultation with an-

\*Dr. Richard Austin Freeman, Thorndyke's creator, died 30th Sept. '43 at Gravesend, England, in his 82d year.



other acknowledged authority. And what easier course could he follow than to drive by "growler" to King's Bench Walk for an evening's confab with Thorndyke before a blazing hearth—Polton close in attendance, and the genial Brodribb, perchance, dropping in presently for a nip of the '63 Port?

Thorndyke shows throughout the chronicles an amazing comprehension of marine flora and biology, a notable indication of his grasp of the subject being found in *The Shadow of the Wolf*.

The mere fact that we find in the respective chronicles no specific reference by either detective to their friendship with one another, or to their collaboration on certain occasions, is, of course, no proof that such an association never existed. It is easy to understand that they would, through their case records, make no direct reference to such an alliance—not through professional jealousy, in truth, but rather due, one might suggest, to professional ethics which establishes a certain code of conduct in the realm of crime investigation as elsewhere.

I would respectfully point out two places not far distant from The Temple where Holmes and Thorndyke may have encountered one another. We find reference in *The Illustrious Client* (1902) to Simpson's, that well-known restaurant in the Strand, where Holmes and Watson frequently lunched together. Is it entirely fantastic to presume that Thorndyke, also, on those occasions when Polton was engaged upon some important laboratory test, dropped into this popular resort for noon-day refreshment? Again, we know that Holmes and his Boswell relaxed now and then at a Turkish Bath off Northumberland Avenue where, as they reclined on adjoining cots, certain aspects of the case then in progress were freely discussed.

At either of these establishments the two foremost crime investigators of their day may have met on occasions and



exchanged brief comment upon some puzzling incident in their professional careers. I like to imagine, indeed, that Moriarty entered within the orbit of their discussions; he had been, it will be remembered, the guiding brain behind innumerable underworld machinations, several of which have never been adequately recorded by Watson. Thorndyke, though a much younger man, had certainly long been aware of the Moriarty legend and had been brought into close contact, through his own investigations, with some of the professor's pupils. Perhaps the tin dispatch-box at Cox's Bank could unearth a document or two bearing upon these random meetings of the two detectives.

There remains another means of communication between 221B, Baker Street and 5A, King's Bench Walk; namely, some London medical Club of which Watson and Thorndyke were perhaps members during the period 1895 to 1905. May I suggest that both doctors were, in due course, called upon to prepare medical papers for the evening's entertainment? Possibly Watson's was called "A New Treatment of Fractures Resulting from Gun Fire," or Thorndyke may have elaborated upon one of his pet theories pertaining to cremation and the possibility of proving identity by analysis of the ashes. At any rate, our two medicos undoubtedly foregathered round the refreshment table later in the evening; who can indeed challenge the surmise that Thorndyke walked back with his confrere to his lodgings and there joined Holmes before the Baker Street fireside? One wishes that Martha Hudson could lend her testimony in support of my conjecture.

The fact remains that Holmes was engaged upon the series of major problems, already referred to, at a period contemporary with the early stages of Thorndyke's own practice. Each was aware, no doubt, of the other's activities and there is, moreover, strong likelihood that the two men at intervals came in contact with one another at Scotland



Yard, where their individual methods and genius for special service were recognized in full measure.

One smiles, in fact, at thought of Superintendent Miller and Inspector Lestrade comparing notes relating to events within the two famed domiciles which they so frequently visited in search of guidance; with a few terse comments added, I expect, concerning Polton's startling contrivances or Watson's blundering date records.

Here one recalls another significant point; namely, that Watson departed from 221B sometime in 1902 to take rooms in Queen Anne Street. What more natural than for Holmes, lonely and restless on occasions, to seek companionship at another fireside where he could, amid the most genial environment, acquire mental stimulus—perchance enlightenment on some puzzling problem—from a distinguished confrere? The journey by cab from Baker Street to The Temple would consume only half an hour or less; refreshment was assured under Polton's watchful supervision, and if the weather invited, possibly the two men enjoyed later in the evening a long ramble through those fascinating thoroughfares in the old City area with which they were both so familiar. I like, indeed, to picture them striding along the Embankment, close by London river, or later, as a bell strikes the hour from some Wren steeple, gazing at the grand façade of The Guildhall, that immortal monument to British culture and civic pride—now, alas, crumbled in ruins.

During the evening stroll—and I am convinced that such strolls actually took place—one sees Thorndyke pass to his companion one of the famous Trichinopoly cheroots. Holmes has, one imagines, carelessly left his briar on the sitting-room table at 221B, but as a last resort accepts the vile weed of which Anstey once remarked, "I'd as soon smoke my own wig." For Thorndyke it was, one recalls, a



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ritual to light up one of these ill-favored cheroots on reaching the successful conclusion of a case.

It may appear to some as rank heresy to project such fantastic images before those who are so deeply devoted to the Baker Street legend, and who hold that the Sacred Writings will transcend and outlive the merely literary masterpieces of that momentous era. There in London, in any event, rests the shrine of our acknowledged leader; no campaign of ruthless destruction can ever obliterate the true bastions of Baker Street; there, too, not far distant, stands The Temple, where at 5A, King's Bench Walk, the light from another familiar study on the first floor guides our steps across an ancient courtyard of legal renown.

I propose a toast to two immortal figures: Sherlock Holmes and John Evelyn Thorndyke—both closely woven into the imperishable fabric of mighty London.





# The Coat of Arms of Sherlock Holmes

BY BELDEN WIGGLESWORTH

*There has been much controversy as to the nature of Sherlock Holmes's armorial bearings, if any. Mr. Belden Wigglesworth, of the Speckled Band of Boston, here presents his studied conception of an appropriate heraldry for the master, and suggests as his motto the Cartesian device: Je pense, alors je suis.*



"ARMS," says Hugh Clark in his delightful *Introduction to Heraldry*,<sup>1</sup> "are the hereditary marks of honour and descent, composed of certain tinctures and figures, either assumed, or else granted by authority, to distinguish persons, families, and communities."

<sup>1</sup> *A Short and Easy Introduction to Heraldry*, by Hugh Clark. London: printed for Edward Edwards, 53, Newgate Street, Near Cheapside; and Rowell and Martin, 46, New Bond Street. 1818.



## *The Coat of Arms of Sherlock Holmes*

It is a remarkable fact that neither Dr Watson nor Holmes himself ever made any reference to the Holmes coat of arms. Yet, obviously, these arms exist, for Sherlock Holmes was, as the saying goes, "a gentleman of ancestry." Since he was the possessor of a coat of arms, it follows that he also had a knowledge of heraldry. This we know from the comment Holmes makes at the beginning of *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*: "Hum! Arms: azure, three caltrops in chief over a fess sable."

We have, of course, to consider the *locus de facto* of the coat of arms of Sherlock Holmes, so let us glance at the winter's night scene in Baker Street when Holmes "had finished pasting extracts into the commonplace book" and Watson was to hear the story of the Musgrave Ritual. "I had ventured to suggest to him," says Watson, "that . . . he might employ the next two hours in making our room a little more habitable." It is curious to note how prosaic are Dr Watson's actions and demeanour on this occasion, as on many others, when he is on the verge of high discovery without ever becoming aware of the fact. "He could not deny the justice of my request," Watson continues, "so with a rather rueful face he went off to his bedroom, from which he returned presently pulling a large tin box behind him." To be sure, the tin box at this time was only "a third full of bundles of paper tied up with red tape into separate packages." By the time its owner had retired to the Sussex Downs, that tin box must have been full to overflowing. Holmes, of course, was careful to hoodwink Watson as to the nature of the box's contents. "There are cases enough here, Watson," he says, with a mischievous look in his eyes, and Watson accepts the explanation implicitly and unimaginatively. We know better, however, for, when Holmes adds: "I think that if you knew *all* that I had in this box . . ." we are instantly and indubitably aware of the hiding-place of the missing coat of arms of Sherlock Holmes!



So let us proceed to its reconstruction as it lies hidden in its tin box, wherever that may be.

In blazoning the coat of arms of Sherlock Holmes we shall follow the terms and rules as laid down by Mr Hugh Clark.<sup>2</sup> "The Escutcheon, or Shield," he explains at the outset, "in arms, means the original shield used in war, and on which arms were originally borne; the surface of the escutcheon is termed the *field*, because it contains such honourable marks as were anciently acquired in the field." Let us admit that the heraldic background of the master of Baker Street is so sufficiently varied as to require that his coat of arms be quartered. Thus, "Party per Cross," as Mr Clark puts it, "is a field divided by two lines, the one perpendicular, the other horizontal, crossing each other in the centre of the field."

What are the "honourable marks as were anciently acquired in the field" where Sherlock Holmes is concerned? He himself gives us a hint. "My ancestors were country squires," he tells Watson, "who appear to have had much the same life as is natural to their class."<sup>3</sup> His, then, was the sturdy, freedom-loving stock that runs through all English history from the beginning—from the Battle of Hastings, down through the Napoleonic Wars, into our own day to the epic of the retreat from Dunkerque where, as the eloquent voice of Winston Churchill expressed it, even though the Empire lasted a thousand years, men would still say *that* was their finest hour. Thus, what we wish to find is a symbol for certain of the qualities pertinent to such a people. Let us see what Mr Clark (who is rapidly assuming a Watsonian rôle herein) can offer us on the subject: "CAT, A MOUNTAIN, a wild cat; in heraldry *it is taken for the symbol of liberty . . . and courage*. These cats being al-

<sup>2</sup> Clark, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> *The Greek Interpreter*.



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ways painted *gardant*, the word *gardant* need not be used in blazon."

In so far as Sherlock Holmes possesses these qualities, does it warrant their appearing on his escutcheon? His own life is the best example of his attitude toward liberty. Indeed, his moral conception of liberty led him on more than one occasion to the borderline of crime itself, the notable example being that of the compounding, or the "commuting," as Watson calls it, of a felony. He connived at the escape of James Wilder and the palpable guilt of the Duke of Holdernessee as an accessory after the fact.<sup>4</sup> He exhibited the same reluctance to invoke the authority of the law when he was hot on the trail of Captain Jack Crocker.<sup>5</sup> "Once or twice in my career," he said then, "I feel that I have done more real harm by my discovery of the criminal than ever he had done by his crime. I have learned caution now, and I had rather play tricks with the law of England than with my own conscience." Assuredly, love of liberty was a characteristic of Sherlock Holmes.

In courage Holmes was never lacking, and his career is full of instances of this other essential quality. The episode of Dr Grimesby Roylott and the bent poker is a case in point, as well as the horrible events which followed later when Holmes and Watson faced the deadliest of perils in the darkness at Stoke Moran.<sup>6</sup> The high point in this connection is that moment—indicated in *The Final Problem* and described by Holmes to Watson in *The Adventure of the Empty House*—when he stood on the edge of the Reichenbach itself: "I walked along the pathway, Moriarty still at my heels. When I reached the end I stood at bay." No, Sherlock Holmes was not ever lacking in courage.

<sup>4</sup> *The Adventure of the Priory School.*

<sup>5</sup> *The Adventure of the Abbey Grange.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Adventure of the Speckled Band.*



So we shall take the cata-mountain *armed and langued*, placing it *saliant* on a field of sable in the first and fourth quarters of the escutcheon. With charges of this sort, as Mr Clark points out, "the claws and tongue are always *gules* (red), unless the field or charge be *gules*, then they must be *azure*." In placing the charge *saliant* we are breaking the above-mentioned rule that "these cats being always painted *gardant*, the word *gardant* need not be used in blazon." However, Mr Clark's own statement concerning the term *saliant* is that it "signifies a beast leaping upon its prey, and is the emblem of the valiant captain." Such is the very essence of the Holmesian saga, so we can have no better "ancient mark" than a cata-mountain leaping upon its prey against a field of sable, the latter being symbolical of that shadowy world ruled over by the late Professor Moriarty.

The blazoning of the second quarter we shall return to later, since it involves secondary charges of a highly significant nature. In blazoning the third quarter we are at once confronted by the French ancestry of Sherlock Holmes. This ancestry cannot be ignored, since Holmes himself recognized its importance. It was on that summer's evening when Mycroft Holmes burst meteorically across the Watsonian horizon.<sup>7</sup> Referring to the possibility that his powers of observation and deduction might have been the result of systematic training, Holmes admits that this might be true to some extent. "But none the less," he says, "my turn that way is in my veins, and may have come with my grandmother, who was a sister of Vernet, the French artist. Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms." "But," Watson persists, "how do you know that it is hereditary?" and Holmes's rejoinder is: "Because my brother Mycroft possesses it in a larger degree than I do." Patently, the charge to be used to indicate this "ancient mark" is the *fleur-de-lis*, or as it is sometimes called, the lily

<sup>7</sup> *The Greek Interpreter.*



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of the flag. "Lilies of the flag," observes Mr Clark, "are those borne in the arms of the kingdom of France."

There is one aspect of Sherlock Holmes's character that is so pronounced we can have no choice but to discuss it frankly. We refer to what Mr R. K. Leavitt has dealt with so admirably as "the Fiscal Holmes."<sup>8</sup> In *A Study in Scarlet* Holmes says, referring to his earliest clients: "I listen to their story, they listen to my comments, and I pocket the fee." All well and good, but, as Mr Leavitt points out so irrefutably, the affairs of these humble clients across the years "could hardly have excited the cupidity of a detective whose clients were increasingly sprinkled with royalty, nobility, cabinet-ministers, millionaires, and foreign governments." No, indeed; for, in *A Scandal in Bohemia*, Holmes exclaims: "A nice little brougham and a pair of beauties. A hundred and fifty guineas apiece. There's money in this case, Watson, if there is nothing else." In *The Adventure of the Priory School*, referring to the cloven hoof of iron "supposed to have belonged to the marauding Barons of Holderness in the Middle Ages," Holmes observes: "It is the second most interesting object that I have seen in the North." The first, of course, was the crossed cheque for six thousand pounds which he patted "affectionately and thrust into the depths of his inner pocket." This is a perfectly natural attitude, for Holmes in his difficult early years had not followed the practice attributed to Watson by Edgar W. Smith of "softening his muscles and hardening his arteries, and certainly spending too much money." The blunt fact is that Sherlock Holmes was always an arch-conservative where pounds, shillings, and pence were concerned.

Having said as much, we can proceed to the charging of the third quarter, placing three *fleurs-de-lis*, *sable*, their tips

<sup>8</sup> "Nummi in Arca, or the Fiscal Holmes," in 22rB: *Studies in Sherlock Holmes*.



*or*, on a field *argent*. In heraldry *argent* means silver, but in French it also means money. The *or*, or gold, of the tips of the charge likewise acknowledges the money-motif. The *sable* of the *fleur-de-lis* differentiates the charge from one having the import of French royalty or nobility.

As we have already noted, the blazoning of the second quarter involves secondary charges of a highly significant nature. For this purpose, we shall divide the field of the second quarter "party per bend sinister"—this is a diagonal line drawn from the sinister chief to the dexter base—and charge each field separately.

"Canting or allusive arms," says Mr Clark, "or rebuses, are coats of arms whose figures allude to the names, professions, &c., of their bearer." Again it is Holmes who supplies us with the necessary information. "Here," he tells Watson in *His Last Bow*, "is the fruit of my leisured ease, the *magnum opus* of my latter years!" He then reads aloud the title of the volume to which he refers, his *Practical Handbook of Bee Culture, with some Observations upon the Segregation of the Queen*. And he adds: "Alone I did it. Behold the fruit of pensive nights and laborious days when I watched the little working gangs as once I watched the criminal world of London." The allusion becomes clearer and, when we refer to Mr Clark, it is distinct and complete: "Bees . . . have three properties of the best kind of subjects; they keep close to their king, are very industrious for their livelihood, expelling all idle drones; they will not sting any but such as first provoke them. In heraldry they represent *industry*." Thus do the bee-hives on the Sussex Downs three miles beyond Crown Lydgate at the end "of a well defined drover's path"<sup>9</sup> present themselves allusively, and we charge the silver field of the second quarter with a bee-hive surrounded by flying black bees.

<sup>9</sup>"Sussex Interview," by P. M. Stone, in *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*.



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Assumptive arms are those arms the right to which has been won in war. "As if a man, being no gentleman of blood or coat-armor, or else being a gentleman of blood and coat-armor, shall captivate, or take prisoner in lawful war, any gentleman, nobleman, or prince (as says Sir John Ferne), he may bear the shield of that prisoner and enjoy it, to him and to his heirs forever."<sup>10</sup> From the long roll of foes vanquished by Sherlock Holmes, whose names glitter fitfully in the dark firmament of the late Victorian and early Edwardian world of crime, it would seem impossible to make a suitable choice, but Mr Clark, while dealing with mill-stones and millrines, comes to our rescue: "*Azure, three mill-stones, argent, name MILVERTON.*" Thus does Charles Augustus Milverton, "the worst man in London, with a smiling face and a heart of marble"<sup>11</sup>—although his demise was not technically of Holmes's doing—become a charge on the azure field of the second quarter of the escutcheon of Sherlock Holmes. He belongs there, if only for the fact that he was very nearly responsible for Holmes and Dr Watson standing before the bar of justice charged with the crime of murder.<sup>12</sup>

We have now to consider the exterior ornaments of Holmes's escutcheon: the wreath, the crest, and the motto. The wreath is a supporter for the crest and, as Mr Clark explains, "is composed of two rolls of silk twisted together, and of the colours or metals of the arms." In the present instance, the colours are silver and sable.

Crests were originally worn on the heads of commanders in the field to distinguish them from their followers. Here again we are faced with a profusion of choices, and here again Mr Clark steps forward at the right moment: "The fox . . . may properly represent those who have done sig-

<sup>10</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> *Appointment in Baker Street.*

<sup>12</sup> *The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton.*



nal service to their prince and country, upon embassies, etc." Holmes on more than one occasion served both prince and country well.<sup>13</sup> "Upon embassies, etc.," there was, for example, the mission he accomplished so delicately and so successfully for the reigning family of Holland, and there were similar missions for the King of Scandinavia and for the French Republic.<sup>14</sup> So we shall choose for Sherlock Holmes's crest a fox *passant-regardant*, that is, a fox looking backwards and walking.

There remains only the motto for us to select. "The motto," states Mr Clark, ". . . added or appropriated to arms, not being hereditary, may be taken, changed, varied, or relinquished, when and as often as the bearer sees fit; and may, with impunity to the assumer, be the very same as is used by other families." Again we have the answer to what we are seeking from Holmes himself. "Why, surely," says he,<sup>15</sup> "as a doctor, my dear Watson, you must admit that what your digestion gains in the way of blood-supply is so much lost to the brain. I am a brain, Watson. The rest of me is a mere appendix. Therefore, it is the brain that I must consider." It is the brain, therefore, that we must consider, and the impunitive assumption of the device of René Descartes, the great philosopher and mathematician (1596-1650), seems eminently to be called for: "*Je pense, alors je suis.*"

And so, at last, we have in their entirety, and with full heraldic detail, the Arms, the Crest and the Motto of Mr Sherlock Holmes of 221B, Baker Street:

**Arms:** Quarterly, sable First and Fourth, a cata-mountain argent, saliant, armed and langued. Second

<sup>13</sup> *The Adventure of the Illustrious Client, The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet.*

<sup>14</sup> *A Scandal in Bohemia, The Final Problem.*

<sup>15</sup> *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone.*

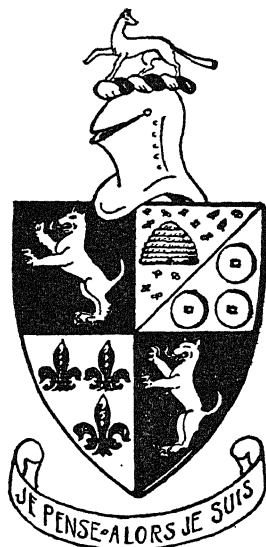


*The Coat of Arms of Sherlock Holmes*

party per bend sinister; first argent, a bee-hive with bees, diversely volant, sable; second azure, three millstones argent. Argent Third, three fleurs-de-lis sable, their tips or.

*Crest:* A fox proper passant-regardant.

*Motto:* Je pense, alors je suis.



*Sherlock Holmes*



*The True and Proper Coat of Arms of Mr  
Sherlock Holmes: With Also the Coats of  
Arms of John H. Watson, M.D., and James  
Moriarty, Sc.D.*

BY W. S. HALL

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*The bearings proposed for the master by Mr Wigglesworth find no sympathetic response in the mind of Mr W. S. Hall, whose long and painstaking research in the authorities has convinced him that the suggestions advanced are superfluous because Sherlock Holmes actually had a coat of arms—as did also Dr Watson and Professor Moriarty. Mr Hall also (as is his vicarious right) offers a new motto: Justum et tenacem propositi.*





### *The True and Proper Coat of Arms*

WHETHER OR NOT one is especially interested in the science and art of heraldry it is nevertheless true that there is hardly a subject more intriguing to read about. This applies particularly to the ancient source books which exist in every European language—also Asiatic if one wants to go that far afield. But there is enough in English to satisfy the most serious student or the merely curious amateur.

My own favorite among the old English writers on heraldry is John Guillim, "late Pursuivant at Armes." I am fortunate to own the third edition of his *Display of Heraldrie*, London, 1638. The title continues, "manifesting a more easie accesse to the knowledge thereof than hath beene hitherto published by any, through the benefit of METHODS whereinto it is now reduced by the study and industry of John Guillim." (This was, I think, a sly crack at Andrew Favine, whose monumental *Theatre of Honour and Knighthood*, printed in London by William Jaggard, 1623, was, as stated, a "Compendious Chronicle and Historie of the Whole Christian World" but was at the same time a badly organized arrangement of the subject. This is the book that Christopher Morley once dubbed "brother-in-ink of the First Folio.")

After a brave array of tributes to the author in prose and verse by his publisher and his friends, Mr Guillim makes his author's bow "to the courteous reader" which prepares him for an orderly arrangement at last of all things heraldic. He gets right down to cases and tells how he is going to do it in a solid two-page paragraph of which I quote the opening lines, only to indicate the constancy and changelessness of heraldry as opposed, say, to football and contract bridge, whose rules and regulations change with the seasons as matters of expediency or convenience. Mr Guillim:

How difficult a thing it is to produce forme, out of things shapelesse and deformed, and to prescribe limits to things



confused, there is none but may easily perceive, if he shall take but a sleight view of the Chaos-like contemperation of things not onely diverse but repugnant in Nature, hitherto concorporated in the generous profession of Heraldry: as the formes of the pure Coelestiall bodies, mixt with grosse Terrestrials; Earthly Animals, with Watery; Savage beasts, with Tame; Whole-footed beasts, with Divided; Reptiles, with things Gressible; Fowles of prey, with Homebred; these again, with River Fowles; Aery Insecta, with Earthly; also things Naturall, with Artificiall; Arts Liberall, with Mechanicall; Military, with Rusticall; and Rusticke with Civill. Which confused mixture hath not a little discouraged many persons, (otherwise well affected to the study of Armory) and impaired the estimation of the profession. For redresse whereof, my selfe, (though unablest of many) have done my best, in this my DISPLAY OF HERALDRY, to dissolve this deformed lumpe, distributing and digesting each particular thereof into his peculiar ranke; where, albeit the issue of my enterprise be not answerable to the height of my desires, yet doe I assure my selfe my labour herein will not be altogether fruitlesse, forasmuch as hereby I have broken the Ice, and made way to some after-comers of greater giftes and riper judgement, that may give a fairer body to this my delineated rough draught, or shadow of a new framed method. . . .

One person not discouraged by the wide expanse of the heraldic horizon is our respected Irregular from Boston, Mr Belden Wigglesworth. He decided that Sherlock Holmes should have a coat of arms and he devised one for him. He has made a good job of it, both as to his armorial research and as to his argument in support of his creation. I have read his thesis with considerable admiration and respect. I have even attempted a graphic rendition of the heraldic achievement he has designed for Mr Holmes. I have done my best in this respect but I regret to report that, after re-reading his argument, after gazing for hours at his Sherlockian coat of arms, crest and motto, I can arrive at but one conclusion. It's magnificent, but it's not heraldry.

And it's too bad, for after all, Wigglesworth probably



### *The True and Proper Coat of Arms*

sweated hours delving into this thing and I know I sweated some little time bringing "forme" out of his well-rendered description of the achievement. But it won't hold; it can't stand, for the very simple reason that one cannot so lightly devise a coat of arms for an actual person, living *or* dead. For Mr Wigglesworth's sake I do hope the Garter King of Arms doesn't hear about this! If only he had dipped into Guillim he might have spotted this bit of warning by William Segar, Principall king of Armes, in his "Lenvoy to the Author"—

But let me tell you, this will be the harme,  
In Arming others, you Your selfe disarme . . .

There are instances galore where novelists, to build up a glamorous or substantial background for their heroes, have alluded to their armorial bearings, even, in some cases, giving them in detail. Then, every once in a while, an otherwise competent novelist such as Richard Harding Davis will provide amusement to students of heraldry by the use of terms such as "bar sinister," a bastard designation that exists in no heraldic encyclopedia. Nevertheless we have no quarrel with the writers of escape literature who want to play around with a few "pelicans vulning themselves, proper" or "seahorses ducally crowned" or "cocks combed, legged and wattled." It doesn't do anyone any "harme." But to impose a coat of arms on a person who already has one is only to contribute to that confusion and chaos of which John Guillim so bitterly complained.

My own contribution to this matter has not sprung full-blown in defense of Sherlock Holmes's armorial rights as a result of Mr Wigglesworth's learned invention. For some time I had brooded about the matter, leisurely projecting my thoughts backwards to the point where I could meet the true ancestors of Sherlock Holmes, see them afield, armed and mounted, visors down and galloping madly



over the moors and fields of England and Scotland bent only on one single object—the wreaking of vengeance on enemies and evildoers. I wondered, too, not only about the lusty eagle-eyed and eagle-beaked bearers of the Holmes standard, but also about the equally lusty and ranging ancestors of the Honorable Professor Moriarty and of the more quiet and dependable forebears who, by a long succession of routine and honorable conceptions, brought about the appearance of Dr Watson. So I laid hold of my copy of John Burke's *Armorie of England, Scotland and Ireland*, third edition, 1844, and retired with it until I had found what I believe are the true arms that Sherlock Holmes, Dr Watson and Professor Moriarty were entitled to bear; whether they did "bear" them, or thought about them at all, having nothing whatever to do with the matter. Just as Holmes would have done, let us get the obvious out of the way to begin with.

*Moriarty*—There could be no dispute about the fact that Moriarty, being a man of character, certainly must have had noble, as well as ignoble, blood in his veins. There is no problem here at all as to *which* Moriarty family he belonged for there is but one Moriarty entry in all of Burke:

*Moriarty* (Ireland). Argent, an eagle displayed, sable.

Crest; an arm embowed in armour, holding a dagger, the blade environed with a serpent.

Well, there it is, the eagle in belligerent and courageous display and, added later as frequently happened, the crest, with the trend to treachery and the gradual moral disintegration of the family brazenly shown in the dagger and serpent. No motto is recorded with these bearings; the Moriartys probably concluded none was necessary. I have supplied one, as is permitted, the motto being the only flexible and changeable member of an heraldic achievement, everything else being rigidly fixed and final. So, for the sake of graphic uniformity there is a motto and it reads,



## *The True and Proper Coat of Arms*

*Aspera me juvant*—"perils delight me." I think this proper and appropriate.

*Watson*—Here is quite a noble and prolific family; there are twenty-seven separate and distinct families with coats of arms. I was a bit dismayed at this discovery and thought I would have to bring considerable deduction to bear on the array, with the possibility that I might have to call on learned Watsonians such as Vincent Starrett and Christopher Morley, even possibly Rex Stout and his perverted viewpoint, to help out. It wasn't necessary. Here are the arms Dr Watson might have borne had he cared to:

*Watson* (Newport). Or, on a chief vert, an ermine passant, proper.

Crest; an ermine passant, proper, vulned on the shoulder, gules.

That settled that. I am no student of the subject of heredity but I do know that one of the many phenomena psychiatrists have constantly to consider is the frequency with which accidents and disasters happen, as they did to the father, so also to the son, and so on down the line. In this case our knight, Watson of Newport, waging battle in a plodding sort of way on an ancient field, was wounded in the shoulder by a quicker opponent. Nevertheless, for his dogged courage, with his wound still red, he was knighted on the field. Too modest to impose his own figure on the crest, he chose, as was his right and privilege, the unobtrusive figure of an ermine.

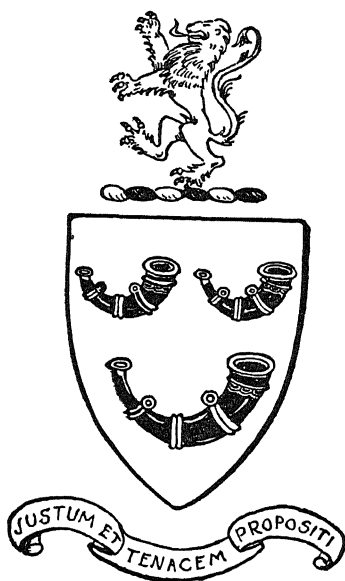
Later it came about that "at the fatal battle of Maiwand" assistant surgeon John H. Watson was "struck on the shoulder by a jezail bullet." Observing the point where our ermine was "vulned" we must conclude that it was the sinister, or left, shoulder where Dr Watson was wounded, a small detail of location he overlooked in the excitement of his opening comments in *A Study in Scarlet*.

The Watsons didn't go in for mottoes to a great extent



and here again I have felt it not improper to supply one. I think Dr Watson would not disapprove of *Mea gloria fides*—"fidelity is my glory."

*Holmes*—The men of the Holmes family apparently did a lot of traveling and carrying-on with other families of nobility, for, examining the twenty-three names listed by Burke, I found myself lost in a maze of quarterings. There was no trouble about a motto in this case, for Holmes (Rampton, 15th century) supplied a sentiment fully carried on by the subject of our inquiry—*Justum et tenacem propositi*—"just and firm of purpose."



### *Sherlock Holmes*

And then, at the end of a succession of *barrys of six, azure and or*, I came to the very last Holmes coat of arms on the page, and, as Holmes once pounced on a wax vesta,



### *The True and Proper Coat of Arms*

I pounced—because I was “looking for it”—on “Argent, three *buglehorns*, sable.” “Come, Watson, come! The game is afoot.” Here again, as so often in the Sacred Writings, the final deduction or clue solves the problem.

Burke offered no suitable crest for the Holmes clan and I had to resort to Fairbairn’s *Book of Crests* (2 Vols., 1892), the authority in this department. There are twelve Holmes crests listed, of which “Holmes, of London,” is obviously the right one. “A Lion rampant, or” fits Sherlock Holmes as well as anything I can think of.

### A NOTE ON THE SKETCHES

It is curious, but fortunate in a way, that the color most common in the coats of arms in this honorable affair is *sable*, or black, and that the metal most mentioned and used is *argent*, or silver. In an all-out rendition of an heraldic achievement the artist has been accustomed to use actual gold and silver where called for. These metals, which used to be easily obtainable, came from France, as to silver, in the form of a tiny rectangular cake set on a little white china dish; the gold was marketed in the form of three little drops on the inside of a mussel shell. The import from abroad of these necessary decorative commodities has long since ceased, and American ingenuity is too occupied otherwise to lend time to solving the secret French process of making these precious metals soluble with water. As an alternative, white can properly be used for *argent* and yellow for *or*, gold. *Or* occurs twice only in this series—the tips of the sable fleur-de-lis in the third quarter of the Wigglesworth-Holmes arms and as the field of the Watson arms.

A long time ago, and not long after heraldry began to appear in books, a celebrated Italian herald, Sylvester Petra-Sancta, devised an arrangement of lines and dots to express in black and white the various tinctures used in



blazonry. *Or* is depicted by dots or points; *argent* as simply a plain white surface. These are the only two metals. The three principal colors are *sable*, black; *azure*, blue; *gules*, red. *Vert*, green, and *purpure*, purple, occur occasionally with still other colors such as *tenne*, orange-tawny, and *sanguine* or murrey (between red and purple) showing up rarely. *Azure* is shown by horizontal lines, *gules* by lines perpendicular, *vert* by diagonal lines from the dexter chief to the sinister base, *purpure* by lines from the sinister chief to the dexter base, and *sable* by a close cross-hatching of horizontal and perpendicular lines. I would have made use of this system but I felt that plain outline black and white was best for clarity in reproduction. At some later time the actual colors could be laid on the original sketches and thence framed and hung in a proper setting, wherever that might be.

The Moriarty arms: there is no problem here to speak of as the field is *argent* or white and the eagle *sable* as shown; (the bird of prey is drawn as usual, covering the whole field of the shield much as the evil presence of Professor Moriarty covered, for a time, the whole of London). In the crest, no metal or color being designated, the colors must be assumed to be *proper*, or natural. Flesh tint for the hand with a touch of something or other on the serpent should do for Professor Moriarty, I believe.

Watson: in black and white these arms look pretty blank, possibly a circumstance more apt and appropriate than after gold has been placed on the field and green on the chief as background for the ermine passant. (At this point I debated as to whether I should undertake a tour through the Sacred Writings to determine if Watson had ever "bab-bled of green fields" but I decided that we could do without this additional reference.) Note, please, that the ermine, both in shield and crest, is depicted *proper*, which would be white anyway, with of course the black tail tip as



### *The True and Proper Coat of Arms*

shown in the present drawing. The most striking touch of color of all this particular achievement is the bloody wound on the ermine in the crest where it has been "vulned on the shoulder." Here, later, black ink must give way to red paint or real blood. I should add, as to the ermine, that this little animal is (and not only in heraldry) a symbol of honor and purity.

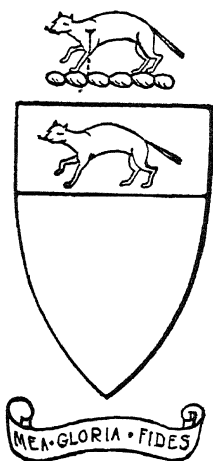
Holmes (Wigglesworth) : I hope Mr Wigglesworth will agree that I have drawn and quartered his Holmes in strict accordance with his description. (For decoration and better balance I have added a helmet to support the crest.) I have drawn his cat-a-mountain "salient" although he himself admits that this creature is *always* depicted "guardant," admitting to myself at the same time that, while the curve of the shield made me distort the shape of the feline somewhat in the fourth quarter so that it looks as if it were alighting from a pole vault, it would have been more difficult still to squeeze it in "guardant." And having, as I believe, already disposed of the whole achievement as being outside the realm of heraldic acceptance, I do not think it necessary to add my reasons for thinking that "guardant" would have been just as fitting for Sherlock Holmes as "salient" in the first place. As for the tinctures, fortunately the metals and colors are a succession of *argent* and *sable* so that the sketch as rendered is practically finished except for the gold tips on the fleur-de-lis, the red claws and tongue of the cats-a-mountain and the rendering of the fox in the crest in the proper colors. The ribbon that bears the motto must be colored eventually; the tinctures of a ribbon are the first metal and the first color mentioned in the arms—in this case *argent* and *sable*, so that actually it's all right as it stands. The same rule governs the colors of the wreath that supports the crest.

I should like again to pay tribute to Mr Wigglesworth's powers of industry and invention. Nevertheless, I am cer-



tain that in years to come, this achievement can only come to be known as "the spurious, or Wigglesworth, Holmes coat of arms."

Holmes (the true and proper) : here again we have simplicity in black and white with only a touch of gold or yellow to be added to the lion rampant in the crest. Mr Wigglesworth most properly states, in speaking of the Holmes coat of arms, "obviously these arms exist." Obviously they do, which is one reason why I wonder that he took the trouble to create something of dubious "forme" to take the place of it. I firmly believe that "three bugle-horns, sable" was one expression that many times raced through the hair-trigger brain of Sherlock Holmes but that he never once gave audible expression to. He knew his coat of arms all right. But he had too many other things on his mind to bother about it. The same goes for Watson and Moriarty. After all, they were three pretty busy men.



*John H. Watson, M.D.      James Moriarty, Esq.*



## *Genealogical Notes on Holmes*

BY RUFUS S. TUCKER

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*The speculations of Sherlockian scholars place the date of Holmes's birth variously in the years 1852, 1853, 1854 and 1855. Dr Rufus Tucker, the eminent economist, favors the year 1853 by reason of collateral evidence uncovered in the course of his exhaustive genealogical researches. Clearly, from what Dr Tucker tells us here, there were genes as well as gasogenes in Baker Street.*

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BEFORE ATTEMPTING to discover who were Sherlock Holmes's ancestors it would be wise to ascertain whether he had any. Was he born of seafoam, like Cytherean Venus? Was he merely the crystallization of an idea? the embodiment of a subconscious desire? Perish the thought! A character so human, so manly, must have been a real person, and as such must have had ancestors. But who were they?

A noted authority—in fact the ultimate personification of authority in every field but this—has recently expressed the opinion that Holmes was a foundling. We cannot reject such an opinion offhand, but it is not a bar against further inquiry. This same personage has been known before to use words in a Pickwickian sense. Moreover, to the scion of eight generations of Hudson Valley patroons a man whose ancestors were merely English country squires would naturally appear to be, comparatively speaking, a foundling.



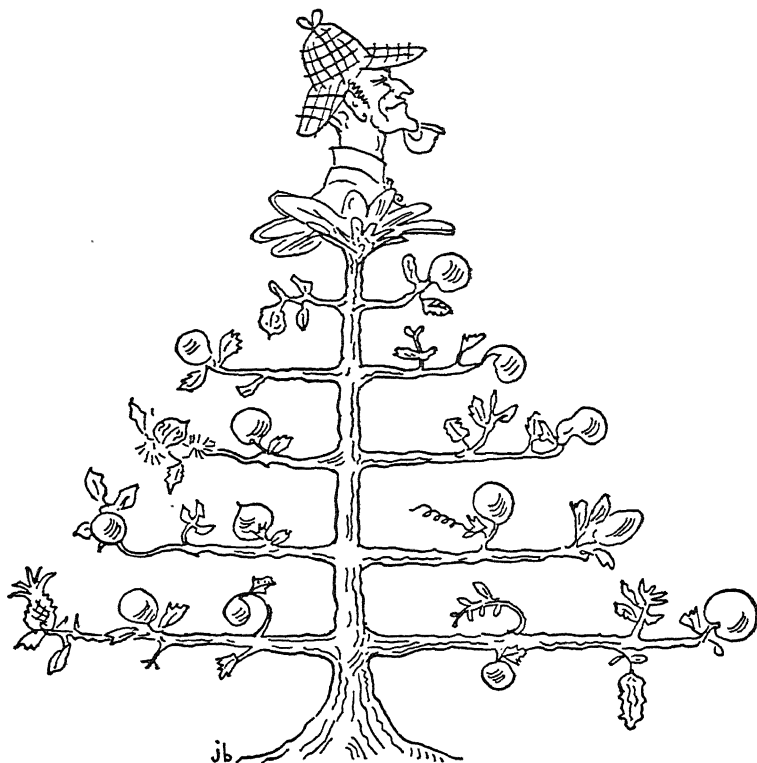
We have three facts that are irrefutable, being based on Holmes's own testimony. His ancestors were country squires; his grandmother's brother was Vernet the French painter; and his older brother was named Mycroft.

It has, I believe, not previously been pointed out that the name Mycroft is a clue to the origin of the family. Could any parent have inflicted so ugly a name on a helpless infant except for the strongest of family reasons? Obviously as the oldest son he was doomed to bear the name of the family estate. The North Riding of Yorkshire contains several manors by the name of "Croft" or some compound of "croft," an old Saxon word that means an enclosed field. The founder of the Holmes line, in order to distinguish *his* "croft" from the others, called it Mycroft, and Sherlock's older brother suffered the consequence.

Sherlock was also a family name, though more euphonious than Mycroft. One's first inclination would be to say that this was the maiden name of Holmes's mother, but since other evidence establishes her maiden name as Gerard it is more likely that Sherlock was the maiden name of Holmes's paternal grandmother. Was there perhaps another son, between Mycroft and Sherlock, named Gerard? It is an interesting speculation.

Sherlock, we are told, barely escaped being named Sherrinford. That raises a strong presumption that either his father's or his grandfather's name was Sherrinford, since no other hypothesis seems adequate to explain why such an ungainly name was even considered. But the father was undoubtedly named Sigurd or Siger, since Holmes sometimes signed himself Sigerson, a Norwegian form of Sigurdson. If the grandfather was named Sherrinford, and was still living at or shortly before the time of our hero's birth, he was doubtless the principal if not the only advocate of that name; but if he died in the nick of time, just before





the child was actually baptized, better counsels could be permitted to prevail.

We have the statement of the literary agent, Doyle, that Sherlock was distantly related to our own Oliver Wendell Holmes. This might be disregarded, were it not for certain striking similarities between them. The title "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," which was bestowed on Oliver, would have fitted Sherlock equally well. Oliver displayed some detective ability in his famous search for the captain, and even more when he solved the mystery of the deaths in the maternity ward. The relationship between Oliver and Sherlock may be taken therefore as established, al-



though both geographically and genetically it was distant, since Oliver's ancestors migrated to Connecticut in 1686.

Incidentally this man Doyle was himself related to Sherlock Holmes, not by blood but by marriage. He was Holmes's stepfather. This is proved not by any direct statement on his or Holmes's part, but by a strong chain of circumstantial evidence. It is known that Doyle disliked Holmes and frequently spoke of him in a derogatory manner. He resented Holmes's fame, but was not above capitalizing it to his own financial advantage, and on one occasion to the financial advantage of his own father. Doyle even went so far by his own confession as to make an attempt on Holmes's life, for which, however, he was never prosecuted. What other explanation for Holmes's forbearance can there be except a family tie and a desire to avoid scandal? Holmes never mentioned either his own father or his stepfather; the first because he died when Sherlock was too young to have formed any impression of him; the second because of their mutual dislike. Much can be deduced from his silence, just as Holmes deduced much from the silence of the dog in the night-time.

A genealogist who relied only on the ordinary methods of research would be stopped with little to show, but the master himself has suggested a fruitful method of approaching the problem. In *The Adventure of the Empty House* he says: "The individual represents in himself the whole procession of his ancestors . . . the person becomes, as it were, the epitome of the history of his own family." In *A Study in Scarlet* he says: "In solving a problem of this sort the grand thing is to be able to reason backward." Combine these two sayings and we can dispense with such mundane and prosaic things as birth certificates and parish registers and family Bibles and the whole paraphernalia of dusty documents.

We know what qualities Sherlock epitomized; therefore



we can reason back to the prototypes, and if chronological inconsistencies are successfully avoided the results may be accepted with as much confidence as the results of investigations carried on in a more conventional manner. The wise observation of Samuel L. Clemens on this point should be borne in mind; of course he was merely rephrasing an idea originally adumbrated by Socrates, and embodied in the ancient adage "It's a wise child who knows his own father."

At first sight it appears odd that many of the identifiable prototypes are persons chiefly known to us through the biographical publications of the ubiquitous and indefatigable Doyle. But that fact is the best corroborative evidence; Doyle as a member of the family had access to the family records.

First: there was a certain Puritanical strain in Holmes, shown by the simplicity of his dress and by his dislike for ostentation in others; also by his contempt for clients who flaunted their marital infidelities. This strain must have come from Micah Clarke, yeoman, of Havant in Hampshire, born 1664, died some time after 1734, son of Joseph Clarke and Mary Shepstone. Clarke's Puritanism was so sincere that he risked his life for it, but was at the same time combined with respect for the rights of others, and a profound distrust of ostentatious piety. Clarke had three grandsons—Joseph, Gervas, and Reuben—but which of these was Holmes's ancestor has not yet been determined.

Second: there was an artistic and musical strain, which Holmes himself rightly attributed to his Vernet ancestors. But further back lies the origin of his love for the violin and his interest in polyphonic music. He was descended from Orlande de Lassus, born 1530, died June 14, 1594, the great master of polyphony. Holmes first learned of this descent while living incognito in Montpellier. Hence his interest in medieval music, referred to by Watson as a



"recent hobby" in November, 1895, shortly after his return from Montpellier. His monograph on the Polyphonic Motets was plainly an act of atavial piety, natural to a man of musical and analytical instincts.

Third: there was an ability and willingness to undergo physical hardships, particularly starvation, for the attainment of his ends. This could only have come from Sir Nigel Loring, of Tilford in Hampshire, born 1327 (or according to another source, 1320), died after 1366. Sir Nigel also contributed to Holmes's highly developed instinct of chivalry and courtesy toward women. Sir Nigel's father's mother was Lady Ermyntrude Loring, who was related to the Fitz-Allans of Farnsworth and the Wolcotts of Guildford. His only child married Alleyne Edricson (born 1346), son of the Franklin of Minstead.

Fourth: there was a degree of self-confidence bordering on the offensive, and made tolerable only by repeated proofs of corresponding ability. This doubtless came from his ancestor Etienne Gerard, brigade-commander in the Imperial Hussars. More remotely it came from Charles de Baatz, seigneur d'Artagnan, Field-Marshal of France, born 1611, killed in battle, 1673. As Vincent Starrett has pointed out, neither made any brags that he was not able and willing to perform. If this were the only point of resemblance between Holmes and d'Artagnan some doubt of the connection might be justified, but one of d'Artagnan's exploits clinches the argument: viz. his masterly reconstruction of the duel between de Guiche and de Wardes, based on a careful survey of footprints and bloodstains, with no evidence whatever from witnesses.

Similarly the methods of two great detectives of ancient times were so similar to those of Holmes that heredity is the only possible explanation. The connecting lines cannot be traced, as the records have long been destroyed. But if skill of this sort is a recessive characteristic, then accord-



ing to the Mendelian laws of heredity it would not manifest itself unless two possessors of the recessive gene should mate, and since that gene is undoubtedly rare many centuries might pass without such a mating. We should not, therefore, be surprised if we find no possessor of such a combination of genes between d'Artagnan and the beginning of the Christian era.

However, there were two men in ancient Babylon who obviously contributed to Holmes's ancestral strain. Their methods lacked some of Holmes's finesse, but contained the germs of his system. Daniel, alias Belteshazzar, who lived in Babylon in the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, displayed great skill in analysing the false testimony of the lecherous elders at the trial of Susanna. He also used the device of scattered ashes to trap the priests of Bel by their footprints, although his method was not to be compared for subtlety with that of Holmes in *The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez*.

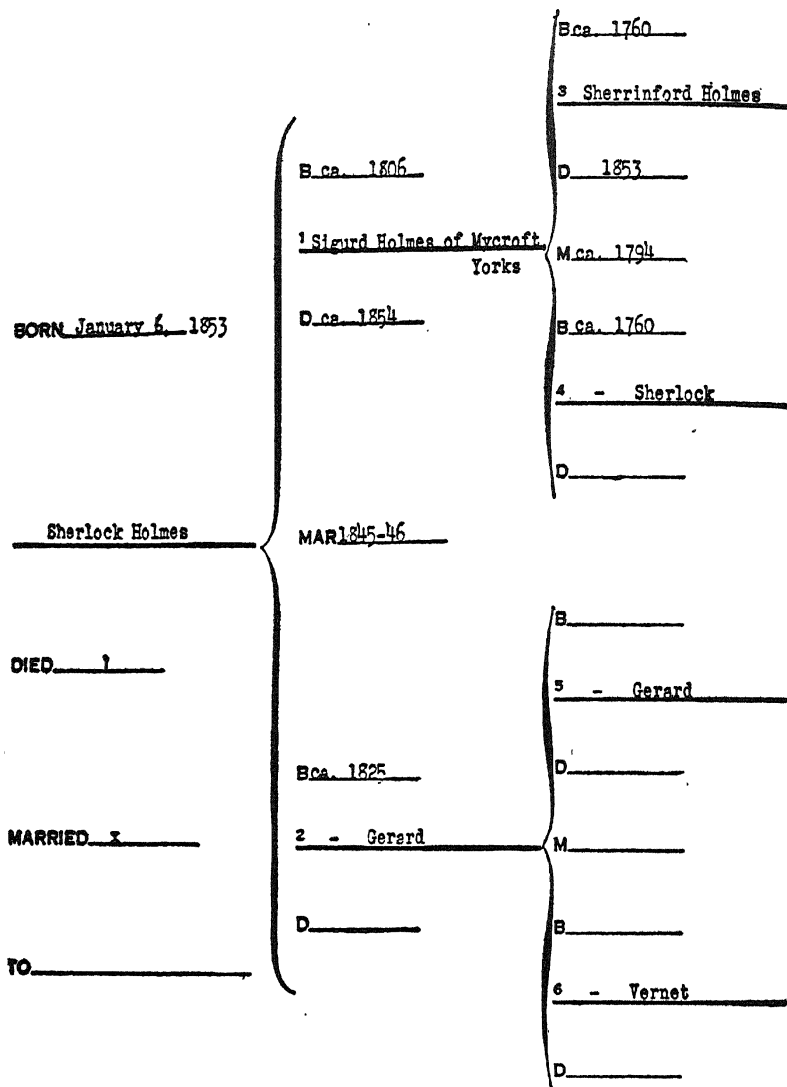
A certain Zadig apparently followed Daniel in Babylon, although his biographer, Voltaire, neglected to state the exact years in which he flourished. This Zadig got himself into serious difficulties by describing in detail the queen's spaniel and the king's horse, without ever having seen them. He had the Holmesian powers of observation and analysis, but lacked the final touch of judgment that distinguishes genius from mere talent. He need not on that account be rejected as an ancestor; the judgment could have come from other sources.

If Daniel and Zadig can properly be reckoned among Holmes's paternal ancestors, that would be an interesting confirmation of the theory that the English are descended from the lost ten tribes of Israel. But that is too involved a subject to go into on this occasion.

Coming back to modern times it is necessary, in the interest of scientific impartiality, to mention Gerard's father-



ANCESTRY OF





# Genealogical Notes on Holmes

SHERLOCK HOLMES, OF LONDON

(Name of Registrant here)

|                               |                            |                 |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| B _____                       | 15 - Holmes                | B _____         |
| 7 - Holmes                    | M _____                    | D _____         |
| D _____                       | 16 - -                     | B _____         |
| M _____                       |                            | D _____         |
| B _____                       | 17 - Edricson              | B _____         |
| 8 - Edricson                  | M _____                    | D _____         |
| D _____                       | 18 - -                     | B _____         |
|                               |                            | D _____         |
| B _____                       | 19 - Sherlock              | B _____         |
| 9 - Sherlock                  | M _____                    | D _____         |
| D _____                       | 20 - -                     | B _____         |
| M _____                       |                            | D _____         |
| B _____                       | 21 - Clarke                | B _____         |
| 10 - Clarke                   | M _____                    | D _____         |
| D _____                       | 22 - -                     | B _____         |
|                               |                            | D _____         |
| B 1784, Gascony               | 23 - Gerard                | B _____         |
| 11 Etienne Gerard             | M _____                    | D _____         |
| D after 1844                  | 24 - d'Artagnan            | B _____         |
| M (2) 1805                    |                            | D _____         |
| B 1787                        | 25 Charles Bernac          | B 1765          |
| 12 Sibylle Bernac             | M 1786                     | D 1805          |
| D _____                       | 26 - -                     | B _____         |
|                               |                            | D _____         |
| B 1758, Bordeaux              | 27 Claude Joseph Vernet of | B Aug. 14, 1714 |
| 13 Antoine Charles Horace     | M 1745 Avignon             | D Dec. 3, 1789  |
| D Nov. 17, 1835, Paris Vernet | 28 Cecilia Virginia Parker | B _____         |
| M 1787                        |                            | D before 1789   |
| B _____                       | 29 Jean-Michel Moreau of   | B March 1741    |
| 14 Catherine-Francoise        | M _____ Paris              | D Nov. 30, 1814 |
| 14 "Fanny" Moreau             | 30 - -                     | B _____         |
| D _____                       |                            | D _____         |



in-law, the unscrupulous "Uncle Bernac," from whom Holmes appears luckily to have inherited nothing.

The Vernet family is described in the standard reference books on French art, and their relationships are shown in the accompanying table. Unfortunately neither the table nor the references extend far enough back to include the link with de Lassus.

Doubtless future investigators will be able to fill in some of the distressingly numerous lacunæ in the Holmesian genealogy. Partisans of Moriarty will doubtless invent skeletons to fit the family closet and criminals to hang from the branches of the family tree. Petty pedants will carp at the absence of documentary evidence, forgetting that documents can be forged, but a careful hypothesis can only be overthrown by a better one. Of one thing, however, we can be sure; that in the Valhalla of the great men of all ages Holmes's ancestors, no matter how exalted they may be, will hasten to honor themselves by claiming him as one of their own.



## *The Case of the Missing Patriarchs*

BY LOGAN CLENDENING, M.D.

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*Those who speak of Sherlock Holmes's death, or of his posthumous adventures, are thinking, of course, of his supposed demise in 1891, when he walked to the brink of the Reichenbach Fall with Professor Moriarty and disappeared from the world for three empty years. Dr Clendening's classic piece on Holmes's first case in Heaven must be read against this background. It might, we suggest, have been entitled "The Navel Treatise."*

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SHERLOCK HOLMES IS DEAD. At the age of eighty he passed away quietly in his sleep. And at once ascended to Heaven.

The arrival of few recent immigrants to the celestial streets has caused so much excitement. Only Napoleon's appearance in Hell is said to have equaled the great detective's reception. In spite of the hail of log which rolled in from the Jordan, Holmes was none the less bowled in a hansom to audience with the Supreme Ruler. After the customary exchange of amenities, he said:

"Mr Holmes, we, too, have our problems. Adam and Eve are missing. Have been for some time, in fact, for nearly two æons. They used to be great attraction to visitors and we would like to commission you to discover them."

Holmes looked thoughtful for a moment.

"We fear that their appearance when last seen would



furnish no clue," continued Jehovah. "A man is bound to change in two æons."

"A moment," interrupted Holmes. "With luck I—could you make a pretty general announcement that a contest between an immovable body and an irresistible force would be staged in that large field at the end of the street—Lord's, I presume it is?"

The announcement was made and soon the streets were filled with a slowly moving crowd. Holmes stood idly on the divine portico watching them.

Suddenly he darted into the crowd and seized a patriarch and his whimpering old mate; he brought them to the Divine Presence.

"It is," asserted Deity. "Adam, you have been giving us a great deal of anxiety. But, Mr. Holmes, tell me how you found them."

"Elementary, my dear God," said Sherlock Holmes, "they have no navels."





# *Monody on the Death of Sherlock Holmes*

BY E. E. KELLETT

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Toll for the brave,  
 That was so strong and hearty;  
 That tumbled in the wave  
 Along with Moriarty.

No longer need we rush  
 To catch the early "Strand";  
 To read Red-Headed Leagues,  
 Or of the Speckled Band.

Ah, never shall we learn  
 The tale of that man's life  
 Who took out his false teeth  
 And threw them at his wife.

Dick Donovan may write  
 A hundred tedious tomes,  
 But we shall never see  
 Another Sherlock Holmes.

Let scoundrels all rejoice  
 Throughout our mourning land,  
 For Sherlock Holmes is gone,  
 Gone to a better Strand.







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# ABOUT DR WATSON

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*"I am lost," said Sherlock Holmes, "without my Boswell." It would have come a little closer to the truth, perhaps, if he had said that without the good and faithful Watson he would never have been found. For while the deeds he did were epic, and while his contributions to the cause of justice in the unending battle between right and wrong mark him as one of the world's great humanitarians, the brilliant light of his reputation would probably have been hidden, save for his counselor and friend, behind a fog as thick as any that ever rolled through London's streets.*

*Who was there, indeed, to make his virtues known? Not Gregson or Lestrade, surely, or any of the other minions of the Yard: they could not have been expected to court their own embarrassment by telling of his triumphs. Not the daily press: by coincidence or conspiracy even The Times and the Gazette seemed consistently and quite mysteriously to be either uninformed or misinformed of all the things he did. Not Holmes himself: the two mediocre accounts from his own pen of the cases of the Blanched Soldier and the Lion's Mane provide no promise that he could have impressed the public autobiographically with an adequate measure of his stature. Not Brother Mycroft: skilled and accomplished though he was, he lacked both the knowledge and the driving energy required by the*



*task. Not even Martha Hudson: however intimately and currently she may have kept the local conciergerie informed, the wider orbits essential to a full renown were still beyond her reach.*

*There remained, then, to assume the Homeric burden and assume it gloriously and well, only John H. Watson, M.D., late of the Army Medical Department. It is he who has given us the picture of Sherlock Holmes as we know him, and who is responsible for our knowing him at all. For this, needless to say, he has our everlasting gratitude: it is enough by itself to endear him to us all. And yet he is deserving of our admiration and respect on other counts as well; for Watson was a doer of the word and not a sayor only; a player in the game who helped perform the deeds of which he wrote. Here was no soft and dawdling scrivener who watched the battle from afar; here was a man of strength and action, a veteran of the Afghan wars "cast in the bull-dog mold"; a tough old soldier to whom the master turned when danger lay ahead, on whom he leaned when things were darkest.*

*It is fitting that this strong right arm of Sherlock Holmes should have a generous place in the sun of our esteem, and that a grateful tribute should be paid him here and now.*



## *A Belated Eulogy: To John H. Watson, M.D.*

BY REGINALD FITZ, M.D.

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*The ethics of the medical profession, which are perhaps more stringent than those prevailing in the field of literary criticism, might be expected in the ordinary course to place restraints upon the opinions voiced by one exponent of the art of healing with respect to the abilities of another. Obviously, and fortunately, Dr Reginald Fitz has found himself under no compulsion to take account of any such niceties in this appraisal he has given to the character and capacities of Dr Watson. He feels that Watson was not only a writer of parts and a sound all-around fellow, but also—if only incidentally—a great doctor.*

---

Old soldiers never, never die,  
They simply fade away.

FOR A GREAT many years I have felt that some member of the medical profession owed a glowing tribute to Dr John H. Watson, late of Her Majesty's Indian Army Medical Corps. For doctors, of all people, are particularly in his debt. Speaking for myself, I can only say that his appearance in my sick room helped more to carry me happily through the vicissitudes of sore throats, measles and chicken pox than any medicine I received; moreover his presence on repeated occasions has gone far to teach me the therapeutic significance of the fact that with proper technique,





being ill can be made into a fine adventure. Any doctor with the gift of making sick folk feel this way about disease, especially in the case of a hopeless, progressive malady, is a splendid one; John Watson, with countless patients all grateful to him because he has helped them to acquire this viewpoint, must be ranked forever as one of the most versatile and universally beloved physicians.

John Watson owed much of his success in life to his fortunate choice of parents, because like so many of the best of our clan his father also was a doctor. Watson's father was an eye specialist of Portsmouth, England. Not having much to do in his early days he wandered from the usual beaten track of righteousness and had a dazzlingly romantic affair. The result of this indiscretion was a baby; at first like a nebulous idea without shape or definition but later to grow proudly. When the sex of this baby was determined and the question of names arose the father at first thought that Ormond Sacker<sup>1</sup> would be suitable. But better judgment prevailed and finally the baby was christened John

<sup>1</sup> *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes.*



H. Watson. All this happened in 1886, though the date of the baby's apparent birth was 1852.

But little is known of John Watson's early days or how he was brought up, though certain facts stand out clearly. Although he spent a portion of his boyhood in Australia<sup>2</sup> he was educated in England, being sent to a good school and playing with certain boys of gaudy relationship, like young Tadpole Phelps<sup>3</sup> whose uncle was a Lord. His intimate friends, for some reason, nicknamed him James<sup>4</sup> and probably called him Jim; he had an older brother who, unfortunately, died of alcoholism. It may be that Jim was helped through school by this brother and on this account treasured his battered watch with the thousands of scratches around the keyhole. Or perhaps Jim grew up as best he could, turning out, I imagine, into a stalwart youth, matter of fact, courageous, good at games,<sup>5</sup> something of a gambler,<sup>6</sup> not averse to a little mischief now and again and heartily in sympathy with the point of view of a V. A. D. I knew in the war. She told me that she believed in smiling quite indiscriminately at all good-looking members of the opposite sex because she so enjoyed the sight of cheerful faces.

When Watson was in his early twenties he decided to follow in his father's footsteps and accordingly enrolled in the University of London Medical School,<sup>7</sup> receiving his M.D. degree in 1878. During his medical school career he worked in surgery at Saint Bartholomew's Hospital and evidently acquired a certain amount of surgical experience. In the spring of 1878, on graduation, he found himself without kith or kin in England and no foothold by which

<sup>2</sup> *The Sign of the Four.*

<sup>3</sup> *The Naval Treaty.*

<sup>4</sup> *The Man with the Twisted Lip.*

<sup>5</sup> *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Adventure of the Shoscombe Old Place.*

<sup>7</sup> *A Study in Scarlet.*



to begin the arduous climb to a successful practice. At that particular time England was about to indulge in the Second Afghan War. The newspapers were bitter over the indignities that were being heaped upon the British Lion along the Indian frontier, and the Russian Bear seemed always to be snarling. A good deal of recruiting was being done in London with fine promise of adventure and excitement to anyone with spirit. Therefore, Dr Watson, good sport that he was, naturally joined the Colours as soon as he could and proceeded to Netley to go through the course prescribed at that time for military surgeons, was duly attached to the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers and received orders for active service abroad.

He arrived in Bombay at an exciting time. Early in September '79, Sir Louis Cavagnari with a group of companions in residency at Kabul had been attacked and murdered by a rabble of Afghans. This resulted in a punitive expedition by the British across the border and in a good deal of miscellaneous fighting. Dr Watson worked his way from Bombay to Kandahar, planning to join the headquarters of his unit there, but on arrival was commandeered at once to join the Berkshires under General Burrows. Ayub Khan, an Afghan chief, with considerable strength had just set out from Herat in hopes of capturing Kandahar, and General Burrows and Dr Watson were detailed to prevent this. On July twenty-seven, 1880, Dr Watson and the Afghans met at Maiwand, a small village some fifty miles to the northwest of Kandahar. It was a disastrous day for Dr Watson and England, as the Afghans proved overwhelming: of 2476 British soldiers engaged, 934 were killed and 175 were wounded. Dr Watson had a busy day at the front treating as best he could his comrades who had been hacked before his eyes, until he too copped two bullets, one in the leg and one in the shoulder, the latter shattering the clavicle and grazing the subclavian artery; luckily he was not



### *A Belated Eulogy*

made prisoner due to the devotion and courage of Murray, his orderly, who threw him across a pack horse and brought him safely to the British lines. Evils always come in numbers. As soon as possible Dr Watson was sent to a base hospital at Peshawar, and there was stricken with typhoid fever. He had a long bout with this disease but when he finally was able to appear before a medical board was so weak and emaciated that he was at once sent to England, reaching there late in 1880 or early in 1881.

He gravitated naturally to London, because, as he said somewhat bitterly, that city is the great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained. Queen Victoria discharged him from the active ranks of her service, paying him for his troubles a pension of eleven shillings and sixpence a day, his only means of support. Things looked pretty gloomy. He found living in London rather beyond his means, for he stayed at first at a private hotel in the Strand; finally he determined to take up quarters that were less pretentious.

Having made this resolution, he proceeded to put it into effect in a fashion thoroughly characteristic of all who have had to do with the British Army. His first step was to go to the Criterion Bar for a drink and there, as so often happens, he met a friend. This chap was a young doctor, Stamford, who had been a dresser under him at Saint Bartholomew's in medical school days. They chatted together for a few minutes; in the course of conversation Dr Watson remarked that he was looking for lodgings, trying to solve the problem whether it was possible to get comfortable rooms in London at a reasonable price. Dr Stamford remarked that Dr Watson was the second person he had seen that day who had said the same thing. It appeared that a man working in the chemical laboratory at the Hospital was bemoaning himself that he could not get someone to go halves with him in some nice rooms he had found and



which were not too expensive for two to finance. Dr Watson liked the sound of this and accordingly went to the Hospital to meet this unknown student of chemistry. Dr Watson's own words regarding what happened are too well known to be disregarded. He says in describing this most important episode:

The chemical laboratory was a lofty chamber, lined and littered with countless bottles. Broad, low tables were scattered about, which bristled with retorts, test tubes, and little Bunsen lamps with their blue flickering flames. There was only one student in the room, who was bending over a distant table absorbed in his work. At the sound of our steps he glanced around and sprang to his feet with a cry of pleasure. 'I've found it! I've found it,' he shouted to my companion running towards us with a test tube in his hand, 'I have found a reagent which is precipitated by hemoglobin, and by nothing else.' Had he discovered a gold mine, greater delight could not have shone upon his features.

'Dr Watson, Mr Sherlock Holmes,' said Stamford introducing us.

'How are you?' he said cordially, grasping my hand with a strength for which I should hardly have given him credit. 'You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive.'

And so began a famous friendship.

The next day Dr Watson and Mr Holmes inspected the rooms at 221B, Baker Street which the latter had discovered. These consisted of a couple of bedrooms and a single large airy sitting room, cheerfully furnished, complete with the amiable Mrs Hudson and a gasogene, and illuminated by two broad windows. Dr Watson was as pleased with this flat as was Mr Holmes, they took it on the spot, moved in as soon as possible and settled down to become better acquainted with each other. Here for the next seven years Dr Watson lived happily with his chance found roommate.

One of the interesting sidelights of the friendship be-



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tween Dr Watson and Sherlock Holmes is the way in which the two men reacted on each other. Dr Watson, in his early days in England after the war, tended to be gloomy and depressed: also somewhat neurasthenic, disposed to have a pessimistic outlook on life and perhaps inclined to over-emphasize the way in which the old wound in his leg ached so wearily at every change of the weather. Holmes, on the other hand, suffered from boredom and had fallen into the habit of transcendently stimulating and clarifying his mind with large doses of cocaine. Holmes's peculiar and exciting profession of consulting detective soon erased Dr Watson's introspections and timidities; gradually Dr Watson weaned Holmes from the drug habit.

Dr Watson very quickly, too, became interested in Holmes's methods and by way of occupational therapy for himself fell into the habit of keeping records of his companion's experiences. Thus he developed a facile pen and a literary style that were later to make him famous.

In 1887, a lady for the first time seriously entered Dr Watson's life. At tea time one Tuesday in early September a Miss Mary Morstan came to consult Mr Holmes on a peculiar matter. She was young and blonde, with blue eyes set in a sweet face, small, dainty, perfectly dressed and evidently possessed of great charm. Dr Watson's heart went pit-a-pat; in these days one would say he fell for her. It appeared that Miss Morstan's mother was dead and that her father, a captain in the Indian Army, had disappeared very suddenly and mysteriously some ten years before. Once a year for six years she had been receiving a small cardboard box containing a very large and lustrous pearl without any clue as to the sender; now she received an anonymous letter advising her for her own good to be at the "third pillar from the left outside the Lyceum Theatre" that evening at seven o'clock. What should she do? Sherlock Holmes advised her to meet the assignation and since she was allowed



to bring two companions suggested that he and Dr Watson would accompany her. The upshot of the matter was that on the following Friday evening Holmes solved the mystery of *The Sign of the Four* and the Agra treasure, and Dr Watson, always a fast worker in a tight spot, found himself an engaged man.

Mary Morstan and Dr Watson married shortly. This necessitated a considerable rearrangement of the doctor's affairs. The income from his pension was a little over two hundred pounds a year, and she, poor girl, seems to have been penniless unless her pearls were sold. However, youth was on their side, Dr Watson was thirty-five and Mary twenty-seven. They put their heads together and decided that the only thing to do was for Dr Watson to try his hand at practice. He had no experience, to be sure, except what he had picked up in the Army. But at least he knew minor surgery and enough medicine to tell whether or not a heart was diseased; and no doubt from his Afghan experience was able to prescribe cathartic pills quite fearlessly and to tell by looking at a person whether or not he was seriously ill. In any event, he purchased a connection in the Paddington District<sup>9</sup> from an old general practitioner and this was worth about three hundred a year to him. Luckily enough he soon picked up as a patient an official of the Great Western Railway<sup>10</sup> who never grew weary of advertising his virtues and endeavored to send him all possible business. At the beginning of his married life, too, he discovered another and more interesting way by which to improve his income. In his early days with Holmes he had written a small brochure with the somewhat fantastic title of *A Study in Scarlet*. This dealt with an experience of the detective's, and although Holmes himself was somewhat disparaging about it nevertheless Dr Watson succeeded in

<sup>9</sup> *The Stock-Broker's Clerk.*

<sup>10</sup> *The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb.*



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selling it to a London publisher for twenty-five pounds and proudly saw it printed in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887. This article met with such success that Dr Watson continued with writings of this character, so that from time to time henceforward for many years, various other Sherlock Holmes episodes were forthcoming. Thus in one way or another during the years of their married life John and Mary Watson eked out a reasonable livelihood.

Mary Watson was an exceptional woman. When Dr Watson first saw her he recognized that she had great outward composure of manner; inwardly, too, she must have been unusually serene. I am afraid that it may have been a little difficult at times to get along with the doctor. He was reasonably busy for a beginning practitioner and almost at once affected the Harley Street fashion of secreting his stethoscope in his top hat. No one could hold this against him; it was merely a minor affectation, like his soldierly moustache and the habit of tucking his handkerchief into his sleeve to remind people that he was an Army man. But in addition, in his spare moments he was forever thinking of Sherlock Holmes, talking about him, sorting and writing up his material; and worse still, whenever Mrs Watson left him for a visit or holiday he would close his office and hurry off to 221B, Baker Street to spend the time there with his friend as though he actually were glad to have a vacation from matrimony. His most annoying fault to a conscientious person like Mary, however, must have been the utterly casual manner in which he did his work. He was supposed to be a general practitioner, building up a practice, but he was always ready at an instant's notice to get out his revolver and go off with Holmes on any dangerous adventures that turned up; and such were not infrequent with the advent of time, for the detective, according to Mycroft Holmes of that delectably unsociable Diogenes Club where no member is permitted to take the



least notice of any other, seems to have been heard of almost everywhere owing to the manner in which Dr Watson popularized his skill. Dr Watson would leave whatever he had in the way of work with Dr Jackson or Dr Anstruther or some other doctor around the corner, and chase all over England with Holmes, on the excuse, I suppose, that by so doing he could gather material for further literary efforts that might pay large dividends, but in reality having a most exhilarating holiday. However, Mary Watson quite calmly put up with all this, and although she must have come to hate the word "Holmes" yet she never complained and undoubtedly made her husband very contented. I am sorry to say that she departed this life in 1894: of what cause I know not; probably, as would befit an old soldier's wife, she never actually died but simply faded away.

Thus in 1894, at the age of forty-two, Dr Watson was again alone in London. Three years previously, that Napoleon of Crime, Professor Moriarty, had finished off Sherlock Holmes, so far as anyone knew, taking from Dr Watson the best and wisest man whom he had ever known, and now his wife was gone. But Dr Watson put up a brave front in spite of these bereavements. He was still practicing medicine in his usual half-hearted way to keep the wolf from the door and he was still publishing from time to time certain cases of Sherlock Holmes even after the disappearance of the detective. Because of this avocation he found it expedient to maintain a deep interest in crime, never failing to study with care the various criminal problems which came before the public. It is not remarkable, therefore, that on the evening of March 31st, he should have strolled up Park Lane to have a look at the house in which a socially prominent gentleman named Ronald Adair had been murdered the previous night. There were a good many people doing the same thing, amongst the crowd being an elderly deformed man carrying an armful of books. He looked like



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a poor bibliophile and thoroughly uninteresting. But after Dr Watson had returned to his office he was somewhat disconcerted to have the maid usher in this strange old man.

"You're surprised to see me, sir," said the gentleman.

Dr Watson acknowledged that he was; but he was more surprised still to discover that the old chap was really Sherlock Holmes, who had not indeed been finished off by Professor Moriarty but was again in London; in fact Dr Watson was so surprised that he fainted for the first time in his life.

The rooms at 221B, Baker Street, had been left unchanged, and Sherlock Holmes went back to them again to devote his life to examining those interesting criminal problems which the complex life of London presented so plentifully. A few months later<sup>11</sup> he suggested that Dr Watson retire from practice and return to share the old quarters. This Dr Watson was glad to do, out of sheer loneliness, I suspect, particularly as he found a young doctor named Verner who gave with astonishingly little demur the high price for the practice that Dr Watson ventured to ask, an incident which only explained itself some years later when it came out that Verner was a distant relative of Holmes and that it was Holmes himself who had found the money.

And so Dr Watson again lived with his friend Holmes until 1902. During these years he led the happiest sort of existence, writing and publishing a good deal, occasionally going to his club for a Turkish bath or to the theater or concert, and once, abroad,<sup>12</sup> dabbling in medical literature when there was nothing better to do, and always keeping close record of the comings and going of his roommate. While he never complained very much, yet as he grew older he evidently became a little restless in the over-

<sup>11</sup> *The Adventure of the Norwood Builder.*

<sup>12</sup> *The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax.*



crowded, incredibly untidy quarters with Sherlock Holmes and finally decided to go into diggings of his own. Accordingly, he moved to Queen Anne Street,<sup>13</sup> lived there for a time and presently remarried.<sup>14</sup> Nothing is known of the second Mrs Watson. Mr S. C. Roberts<sup>15</sup> has suggested with ingenious reasoning that she was Violet de Merville whose engagement to the notorious Baron Adelbert Gruner Dr Watson had adroitly caused to be broken. Of this, however, there is no proof. I hope that she was not an unduly cantankerous creature, though I have my doubts. Surely she was rather more worldly than her predecessor and had a firmer hand, for Dr Watson at once returned to practice and soon bore every sign<sup>16</sup> of the busy medical man. He saw Sherlock Holmes less and less and by 1907 had passed almost beyond his friend's ken except for an occasional week-end visit.

Like all good things, Dr Watson, the same blithe lad as ever to those of us who were brought up by him, gradually mellowed and grew old until at last he, too, faded away to rejoin Mary Morstan. He had a gay, adventurous, picturesque life, and, I think, an extraordinarily winning personality. Many people already have taken cognizance of his knack at biography. I claim that he was a great doctor and on this account take my hat off to his memory. He will be better known to posterity than most of his medical contemporaries although during their lives they may have appeared to contribute more directly to the advancement of scientific medicine. He left behind him nothing in the way of worldly goods except somewhere<sup>17</sup> in the vaults of the bank of Cox and Company, at Charing Cross,

<sup>13</sup> *The Adventure of the Illustrious Client.*

<sup>14</sup> *The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier.*

<sup>15</sup> *Dr Watson: Prolegomena to the Study of a Biographical Problem.*

<sup>16</sup> *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone.*

<sup>17</sup> *The Problem of Thor Bridge.*



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a travel-worn and battered tin dispatch box, crammed with unpublished Sherlock Holmes case reports, and with the name, John H. Watson, M.D., Late Indian Army, painted upon the lid. But what is more important from a doctor's viewpoint, and what makes him a great contributor to the practice of medicine, he left behind him something permanently valuable for the treatment of sick and suffering humanity: he left behind him a never-failing prescription for taking tired people to the Islands of the Blest.



## *Dr Watson*

BY STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

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*It is not enough to have a tribute from the profession itself as to Dr Watson's character and capacities. What the lay mind thinks of him is also of great importance, and it is therefore pleasant and refreshing to call up the words spoken in the good doctor's behalf by one who was a master not only of words but of ideas, and who always voiced them both with great forcefulness and fearlessness.*

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HEROES AND IDOLS are birds of a different feather. If one could crack a bottle of Anjou with the Three Musketeers—or come jingling down for Christmas to Mr Wardle's. . . . But there an uneasy sense of my own incapacities overwhelms me. Porthos would have on his company manners for a stranger and Aramis look a little askance as soon as he discovered one's lack of quarterings, while the Comte de la Fère's exquisitely handsome features would take on the perturbed expression of one who unexpectedly finds a fly in his wine. And the hearty practical fun of Manor Farm might seem a little too hearty and practical after a while for a constitution degenerately modern. Watson, on the other hand—one cannot imagine feeling gauche or ill at ease in Watson's presence—the very thought of him is as stodgy and comfortable as a Morris chair. Surely there is no other character with so ineffable a capacity for surprise or so restfully limited a vocabulary for its expression.



"Marvelous, my dear Holmes, marvelous!" the hearty voice booms out for the thousandth time, with as fresh an accent of wonder as a child's. If he had a tail he would wag it incessantly—there is something very canine about him somehow; it is easy to see him transformed, a solemn, ponderous St. Bernard, galumphing after Holmes with portentously stately bounds. As far as professional skill goes, one cannot rank him with the leaders, I fear—his practice was too subject to continual interruption. But his bedside manner must have been ideal. I would rather die some pleasantly fictional death with Watson in attendance than recover under the aseptic hands of a modern practitioner. And then, of course, there are the tales still locked in his little black bag. Holmes discusses only bees, now, and Conan Doyle has forgotten . . . but I am sure that if you got Watson alone in a corner, you could wring from him a few, at least, of the superb, unwritten adventures to which his creator has so tantalizingly alluded only in passing—the repulsive story of the red leech and the terrible death of Crosby the banker—the Addleton tragedy—the incident of Wilson, the notorious canary trainer, whose arrest removed a plague spot from the East End of London.



## *Watson Was a Woman*

BY REX STOUT

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*Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are watchwords with Americans, and there can be no faltering in our determination to stand with Voltaire in defending to the last breath the right of our opponents to be as subversive as they please. Yet when our most cherished institutions are under bold and ruthless attack, we can be forgiven if we search our hearts in an effort to sift tolerance from folly. Mr Rex Stout, who has otherwise and elsewhere exhibited every evidence of soundness of mind and reverence of soul, here launches a heterodox doctrine that challenges the very foundation of our faith. We are torn between an embittered urge to burn him at the stake and a generous compulsion to let him have his say. Calm in the knowledge that our faith is strong, however, and that freedom is our watchword still, we choose to let him have his say.*

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I CANNOT BRING MYSELF to connive at the perpetuation of a hoax. Not only was there never a second Mrs Watson; there was not even a first Mrs Watson. Furthermore, there was no Dr Watson.

Like all true disciples, I have always recurrently dipped into the Sacred Writings (called by the vulgar the Sherlock Holmes stories) for refreshment; but not long ago I reread them from beginning to end, and I was struck by a sin-



gular fact that reminded me of the dog in the night. The singular fact about the dog in the night, as we all know, was that it didn't bark; and the singular fact about Holmes in the night is that he is never seen going to bed. The writer of the tales, the Watson person, describes over and over again, in detail, all the other minutiae of that famous household—suppers, breakfasts, arrangement of furniture, rainy evenings at home—but not once are we shown either Holmes or Watson going to bed. I wondered, why not? Why such unnatural and obdurate restraint, nay, concealment, regarding one of the pleasantest episodes of the daily routine?

I got suspicious.

The uglier possibilities that occurred to me, as that Holmes had false teeth or that Watson wore a toupee, I rejected as preposterous. They were much too obvious, and





shall I say unsinister. But the game was afoot, and I sought the trail, in the only field available to me, the Sacred Writings themselves. And right at the very start, on page 9 of *A Study in Scarlet*, I found this:

. . . It was rare for him to be up after ten at night, and he had invariably breakfasted and gone out before I rose in the morning.

I was indescribably shocked. How had so patent a clue escaped so many millions of readers through the years? That was, that could only be, a woman speaking of a man. Read it over. The true authentic speech of a wife telling of her husband's—but wait. I was not indulging in idle speculation, but seeking evidence to establish a fact. It was unquestionably a woman speaking of a man, yes, but whether a wife of a husband, or a mistress of a lover . . . I admit I blushed. I blushed for Sherlock Holmes, and I closed the book. But the fire of curiosity was raging in me, and soon I opened again to the same page, and there in the second paragraph I saw:

The reader may set me down as a hopeless busybody, when I confess how much this man stimulated my curiosity, and how often I endeavored to break through the reticence which he showed on all that concerned himself.

You bet she did. She would. Poor Holmes! She doesn't even bother to employ one of the stock euphemisms, such as, "I wanted to understand him better," or, "I wanted to share things with him." She proclaims it with brutal directness, "I endeavored to break through the reticence." I shuddered, and for the first time in my life felt that Sherlock Holmes was not a god, but human—human by his suffering. Also, from that one page I regarded the question of the Watson person's sex as settled for good. Indubitably she was a female, but wife or mistress? I went on. Two pages later I found:



*Watson Was a Woman*

... his powers upon the violin . . . at my request he has played me some of Mendelssohn's *Lieder* . . ."

Imagine a man asking another man to play him some of Mendelssohn's *Lieder* on a violin!

And on the next page:

... I rose somewhat earlier than usual, and found that Sherlock Holmes had not yet finished his breakfast . . . my place had not been laid nor my coffee prepared. With . . . petulance . . . I rang the bell and gave a curt intimation that I was ready. Then I picked up a magazine from the table and attempted to while away the time with it, while my companion munched silently at his toast.

That is a terrible picture, and you know and I know how bitterly realistic it is. Change the diction, and it is particularly a love story by Ring Lardner. That Sherlock Holmes, like other men, had breakfasts like that is a hard pill for a true disciple to swallow, but we must face the facts. The chief thing to note of this excerpt is that it not only reinforces the conviction that Watson was a lady—that is to say, a woman—but also it bolsters our hope that Holmes did not through all those years live in sin. A man does not munch silently at his toast when breakfasting with his mistress; or, if he does, it won't be long until he gets a new one. But Holmes stuck to her—or she to him—for over a quarter of a century. Here are a few quotations from the later years:

... Sherlock Holmes was standing smiling at me. . . . I rose to my feet, stared at him for some seconds in utter amazement, and then it appears that I must have fainted. . . .

—*The Adventure of the Empty House*

I believe that I am one of the most long-suffering of mortals.

—*The Valley of Fear*

The relations between us in those latter days were peculiar. He was a man of habits, narrow and concentrated habits, and I had become one of them. As an institution I was like the



violin, the shag tobacco, the old black pipe, the index books, and others perhaps less excusable.

—*The Adventure of the Creeping Man*

And we have been expected to believe that a man wrote those things! The frank and unconcerned admission that she fainted at sight of Holmes after an absence! "I am one of the most long-suffering of mortals"—the oldest uxorial cliché in the world; Aeschylus used it; no doubt cave-men gnashed their teeth at it! And the familiar pathetic plaint, "As an institution I was like the old black pipe!"

Yes, uxorial, for surely she was wife. And the old black pipe itself provides us with a clincher on that point. This comes from an early page of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*:

. . . did not return to Baker Street until evening. It was nearly nine o'clock when I found myself in the sitting-room once more.

My first impression as I opened the door was that a fire had broken out, for the room was so filled with smoke that the light of the lamp upon the table was blurred by it. As I entered, however, my fears were set at rest, for it was the acrid fumes of strong coarse tobacco which took me by the throat and set me coughing. Through the haze I had a vague vision of Holmes in his dressing-gown coiled up in an armchair with his black clay pipe between his lips. Several rolls of paper lay around him.

"Caught cold, Watson?" said he.

"No, it's this poisonous atmosphere."

"I suppose it is pretty thick, now that you mention it."

"Thick! It is intolerable!"

"Open the window, then!"

I say husband and wife. Could anyone alive doubt it after reading that painful banal scene? Is there any need to pile on the evidence?

For a last-ditch skeptic there is more evidence, much more. The efforts to break Holmes of the cocaine habit, mentioned in various places in the Sacred Writings, display a typical reformist wife in action, especially the final



gloating over her success. A more complicated, but no less conclusive, piece of evidence is the strange, the astounding recital of Holmes's famous disappearance, in *The Final Problem*, and the reasons given therefor in a later tale, *The Adventure of the Empty House*. It is incredible that this monstrous deception was not long ago exposed.

Holmes and Watson had together wandered up the valley of the Rhone, branched off at Leuk, made their way over the Gemmi Pass, and gone on, by way of Interlaken, to Meiringen. Near that village, as they were walking along a narrow trail high above a tremendous abyss, Watson was maneuvered back to the hotel by a fake message. Learning that the message was a fake, she (he) flew back to their trail, and found that Holmes was gone. No Holmes. All that was left of him was a polite and regretful note of farewell, there on a rock with his cigarette case for a paperweight, saying that Professor Moriarty had arrived and was about to push him into the abyss.

That in itself was rather corny. But go on to *The Adventure of the Empty House*. Three years have passed. Sherlock Holmes has suddenly and unexpectedly reappeared in London, causing the Watson person to collapse in a faint. His explanation of his long absence is fantastic. He says that he had grappled with Professor Moriarty on the narrow trail and tossed him into the chasm; that, in order to deal at better advantage with the dangerous Sebastian Moran, he had decided to make it appear that he too had toppled over the cliff; that, so as to leave no returning footprints on the narrow trail, he had attempted to scale the upper cliff, and, while he was doing so, Sebastian Moran himself had appeared up above and thrown rocks at him; that by herculean efforts he had eluded Moran and escaped over the mountains; that for three years he had wandered around Persia and Tibet and France, communicating with no one but his brother Mycroft, so that Se-



bastian Moran would think he was dead. *Though by his own account Moran knew, must have known, that he had got away!*

That is what Watson says that Holmes told her (him). It is simply gibberish, below the level even of a village half-wit. It is impossible to suppose that Sherlock Holmes ever dreamed of imposing on any sane person with an explanation like that; it is impossible to believe that he would insult his own intelligence by offering such an explanation even to an idiot. I deny that he ever did. I believe that all he said, after Watson recovered from the faint, was this, "My dear, I am willing to try it again," for he was a courteous man. And it was Watson, who, attempting to cook up an explanation, made such a terrible hash of it.

Then who was this person whose *nom de plume* was "Doctor Watson?" Where did she come from? What was she like? What was her name before she snared Holmes?

Let us see what we can do about the name, by methods that Holmes himself might have used. It was Watson who wrote the immortal tales, therefore if she left a record of her name anywhere it must have been in the tales themselves. But what we are looking for is not her characteristics or the facts of her life, but her *name*, that is to say, her *title*; so obviously the place to look is in the *titles* of the tales.

There are sixty of the tales all told. The first step is to set them down in chronological order, and number them from 1 to 60. Now, which shall we take first? Evidently the reason why Watson was at such pains to conceal her name in this clutter of titles was to *mystify* us, so the number to start with should be the most *mystical* number, namely seven. And to make it doubly sure, we shall make it seven times seven, which is 49. Very well. The 49th tale is *The Adventure of the Illustrious Client*. We of course discard the first four words, "The Adventure of the," which are



repeated in most of the titles. Result: "ILLUSTRIOUS CLIENT."

The next most significant thing about Watson is her (his) constant effort to convince us that those things happened exactly as she (he) tells them; that they are on the *square*. Good. The first square of an integer is the integer 4. We take the title of the 4th tale and get "RED-HEADED LEAGUE."

We proceed to elimination. Of all the factors that contribute to an ordinary man's success, which one did Holmes invariably exclude, or eliminate? Luck. In crap-shooting, what are the lucky numbers? Seven and eleven. But we have already used 7, which eliminates it, so there is nothing left but 11. The 11th tale is about the "ENGINEER'S THUMB."

Next, what was Holmes's age at the time he moved to Baker Street? Twenty-seven. The 27th tale is the adventure of the "NORWOOD BUILDER." And what was Watson's age? Twenty-six. The 26th tale is the adventure of the "EMPTY HOUSE." But there is no need to belabor the obvious. Just as it is a simple matter to decipher the code of the Dancing Men when Holmes has once put you on the right track, so can you, for yourself, make the additional required selections now that I have explained the method. And you will inevitably get what I got:

*Illustrious Client*  
*Red-headed League*  
*Engineer's Thumb*  
*Norwood Builder*  
*Empty House*

*Wisteria Lodge*  
*Abbey Grange*  
*Twisted Lip*



*About Dr Watson*  
*Study in Scarlet*  
*Orange Pips*  
*Noble Bachelor*

And, acrostically simple, the initial letters read down, the carefully hidden secret is ours. Her name was Irene Watson.

But not so fast. Is there any way of checking that? Of discovering her name by any other method, say *a priori*? We can try and see. A woman wrote the stories about Sherlock Holmes, that has been demonstrated; and that woman was his wife. Does there appear, anywhere in the stories, a woman whom Holmes fell for? Whom he really cottoned to? Indeed there does. *A Scandal in Bohemia* opens like this:

To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman. . . . In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex.

And what was the name of *the* woman? Irene!

But, you say, not Irene Watson, but Irene Adler. Certainly. Watson's whole purpose, from beginning to end, was to confuse and bewilder us regarding her identity. So note that name well. Adler. What is an adler, or, as it is commonly spelled, addler? An addler is one who, or that which, addles. Befuddles. Confuses. I admit I admire that stroke; it is worthy of Holmes himself. In the very act of deceiving and confusing us, she has the audacity to employ a name that brazenly announces her purpose!

An amusing corroborative detail about this Irene of the *Scandal in Bohemia*—the woman to Holmes according to the narrator of the tales—is that Holmes was present at her wedding at the Church of St. Monica in the Edgware Road. It is related that he was there as a witness, but that is pure poppycock. Holmes himself says, "I was half-dragged up to the altar, and before I knew where I was I



found myself mumbling responses. . . ." Those are not the words of an indifferent witness, but of a reluctant, ensnared, bulldozed man—in short, a bridegroom. And in all the 1323 pages of the Sacred Writings, that is the only wedding we ever see—the only one, so far as we are told, that Holmes ever graced with his presence.

All this is very sketchy. I admit it. I am now collecting material for a fuller treatment of the subject, a complete demonstration of the evidence and the inevitable conclusion. It will fill two volumes, the second of which will consist of certain speculations regarding various concrete results of that long-continued and—I fear, alas—none-too-happy union. For instance, what of the parentage of Lord Peter Wimsey, who was born, I believe, around the turn of the century—about the time of the publication of *The Adventure of the Second Stain*? That will bear looking into.



## *That Was No Lady*

WITH SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE NATURE OF  
DR WATSON'S WOUND

BY JULIAN WOLFF, M.D.

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*"For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." By the sharp blade of the acrostic alone—the weapon of Mr Stout's own choosing—Dr Julian Wolff in this brilliant riposte cuts cleanly through what little armor the advocate of Watson's femininity ever had. But—alas!—Dr Wolff does more. Not satisfied with the demolition of a theory that had only mysticism and rhetoric to support it, he proceeds by argument and persuasion to redeem the good doctor—if redemption it can be called—from a state of femininity to a state of epicenity. It remains, certainly, for some new champion to arise who will restore Watson finally to the rank and station properly attributed to him by Mr Frank V. Morley—that of Holmes's he-manuensis.*

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### I. THAT WAS NO LADY

UPON ENTERING INTO a literary controversy with Mr Stout, one is immediately conscious of being at a great disadvantage. It would require the knowledge and the pen of an Edgar Smith, the experience and the skill of a Vincent Starrett, as well as the genius and the beard of a Christopher Morley, to equalize the contest. However, no matter



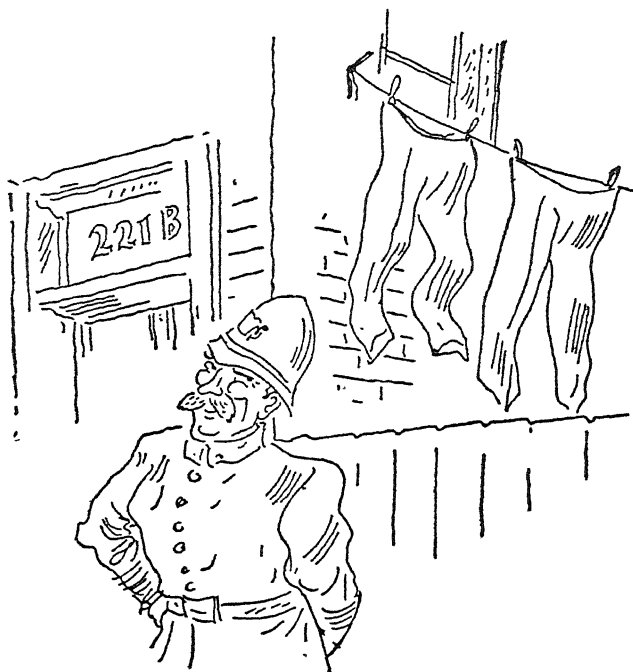
what the odds may be, it is necessary for the Irregulars to reply to Mr Stout's preposterous assertion that one of their heroes is not even a heroine. It is a fellow *man* that is to be defended, and the challenge must be answered.

Needless to say, all true Irregulars have been amazed by the theory that John H. Watson, M.D., Late Indian Army, was a *nom de plume* for Mrs Irene Holmes. As a theory it has one inherent fault—it is intrinsically impossible. However, Mr Stout has supported it by quotations from the Sacred Writings (rivaling the often remarked ability of another bearded personage to quote scriptures for his purpose) and therefore it cannot be lightly dismissed. Fortunately, the same stories from which the quotations are drawn furnish material to prove definitely and for all time that the entire hypothesis is contrary to the known facts.

Mr Stout's first series of quotations is taken from *A Study in Scarlet*. But in this very story we are told that Dr. Watson took his degree of Doctor of Medicine at the University of London in 1878 and then proceeded to Netley to go through the course prescribed for surgeons in the army. Subsequently he was attached to the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers and was wounded at the battle of Maiwand. It is not necessary to point out that no woman did all this—and also frequented the Criterion Bar and smoked ship's tobacco.

Then we have a quotation from *The Adventure of the Empty House* dealing with Dr Watson's fainting spell. However, in using this quotation Mr Stout conveniently omits the words ". . . for the first and last time in my life." By this omission the sense of the text has been altered. A man has to explain a fainting spell. No woman would find an explanation necessary. On the contrary, the occasionally weaker sex frequently seems proud of this





weakness and has been known to simulate it on occasion.

The samples already analyzed will convince the most Irregular mind that it is not necessary to discuss each quotation in detail. However, a brief glance through the Writings will reveal numerous significant incidents. Sherlock Holmes would hardly have sent his wife away overnight to an obscure corner of Essex in the company of Josiah Amberley. And certainly it was not Mrs Holmes who expressed disappointment because Sherlock manifested no further interest in Miss Violet Hunter when once she had ceased to be the center of one of his problems. Even Mr Stout will not insist that it was Mrs Holmes who, revolver in hand, dashed into a prehistoric hut on the Devonshire moors in search of a desperate criminal. No, it is quite ap-



## *That Was No Lady*

parent that any attempt to identify Watson as a woman, and specifically as Irene Adler, is a futile one—especially when we consider that Irene is not pictured in a very favorable light. In fact, because of the way her character is revealed in the Sacred Writings, she is toasted, today, only at Irregular gatherings.

As a final clincher, we have only to quote the description of Watson obtained by Lestrade from the members of Milverton's household: "He was a middle-sized, strongly built man—square jaw, thick neck, moustache . . ." Obviously Mr Stout will have to *cherchez* elsewhere for *La Femme*. Just one hint—like Lady Hatty St. Simon, Mrs. Holmes is a myth. There is not, and there never has been, any such person.

One cannot leave this subject without deploring Mr Stout's introduction of the notoriously false science of acrostics into the research. Very little investigation is needed to reveal the true message concealed in the stories.

It is to be read in the titles of certain of the tales themselves, by taking the first letter in the first line, the second letter in the second line, and so on, after arranging the titles in the following mystic order:

N a val Treaty  
M U sgrave Ritual  
R e T ired Colourman  
M i s ing Three-Quarter  
S o l i T ary Cyclist  
S h o s c O mbe Old Place  
B l u e C a R buncle  
C o p p e r B E eches  
T h e S u s s e X Vampire  
T h e G l o r i a S c o t t  
C a s e o f I d e n T i t y



About Dr Watson

Noble Bachel O r  
The Illustrio U s Client  
The Resident Pa Tient

Let us hope that this will be the acrostic to end all acrostics and will terminate all efforts in this direction before some more astute cryptographer comes forward with proof that Francis Bacon wrote the *Practical Handbook of Bee Culture, with Some Observations upon the Segregation of the Queen*.

II. SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE NATURE OF  
DR WATSON'S WOUND

One trusts that the theory of Dr Watson's femininity has by now been demolished. However, Mr Stout has succeeded in demonstrating that the good doctor did possess a certain petulance usually associated with the female rather than with the male sex. The presence of this characteristic leads the logical mind to deduce that there was a deficiency somewhere in Dr Watson's make-up. What is more natural than to associate this with his wound? We are able to refer to a parallel case that occurred in one of the English counties during the early part of the eighteenth century. This involved Mr Toby Shandy, Tristram's uncle, and it is to Mr Laurence Sterne that we are indebted for a detailed description. Uncle Toby was an amiable gentleman, not very astute, who served as an audience for the intellectual Mr Shandy, Sr. When we add that Uncle Toby was an army officer, retired because of a wound that bothered him considerably, we have established a very close parallel between him and Dr Watson.

Let us consider the parallel cases in greater detail. Uncle Toby's wound involved a part of his anatomy which Mrs Bridget described by "—holding the palm of her left hand parallel to the plane of the horizon, and sliding the



fingers of the other over it, in a way which could not have been done, had there been the least wart or protuberance—"—in other words, the groin. Dr Watson's wound was not so minutely described, and it is this fact that accounts for the confusion that has existed up to the present time. However, since it is obvious that one wound could not involve both his leg and his shoulder, it is reasonable to assume that the wound was located half way between the parts mentioned. In other words, it was a wound just like Uncle Toby's. Naturally, writing as he did during the reign of a certain gracious lady, Dr Watson could not be as frank as Tristram Shandy was in the days of the Georges.

Now Uncle Toby was unsuccessful in his marriage proposal because of his wound (" . . . when one is married, one would choose to have such a thing by one at least—"). It is true that Dr Watson did get married, but, as Mr Elmer Davis has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> evidence is available to show that his marriage, or marriages, did not turn out as happily as could be expected. When our attention is drawn to the curious incident of Watson's children and to his evident preference for the cold type of woman, as exemplified by Violet de Merville (Mr S. C. Roberts has suggested<sup>2</sup> that Dr Watson married her), we may consider the matter definitely settled. Each fact is suggestive in itself. Together they have a cumulative force. The two cases, and (what is more important to us) the two wounds, were exactly parallel.

Now, let us calmly define our position. Any one who has read up to this point will realize that this essay has disproved the false theory of Dr Watson's sex, has discredited the science of acrostics, and has discovered the true nature of Dr Watson's wound. This makes it a rather ambitious

<sup>1</sup> "The Emotional Geology of Baker Street," in *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*.

<sup>2</sup> *Dr Watson: Prolegomena to the Study of a Biographical Problem*.



*About Dr Watson*

undertaking, and it is vain to hope that more can be accomplished in an article of reasonable length. Therefore it is only fitting that we cease prying into the most intimate affairs of Dr Watson and allow him to enjoy his stay in that special Valhalla, together with the best and the wisest man we have ever known.



## *The Mystery of the Second Wound*

BY JAMES KEDDIE, SR

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*Having done with the theories of Mr Stout and Dr Wolff, we turn with pleasure to what seems a much more plausible explanation of the nature of Dr Watson's Second Wound, written by that beloved Irregular and founder of the Speckled Band of Boston who passed from the ranks two years ago, Mr James Keddie, père. The Holmesian tradition is carried on affectionately in the family by James Keddie, fils, who is now Cheetah of the Speckled Band, and whose kind permission makes possible the publication here of his father's work. The reader, when he has finished with this masterly argument, will surely be able to distinguish between arsis and thesis.*

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THE MOST IMPORTANT, and certainly the most neglected, of all the characters in the great drama of Baker Street is Murray. Without Murray, there would have been no Watson in those hallowed rooms in Baker Street; and without Watson, Holmes as likely as not would have passed unsung. Murray, the humble orderly of the Berkshire Regiment, snatched Assistant-Surgeon J. H. Watson (of the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers) from the very hands of the murderous Ghazis on the stricken field of Maiwand.<sup>1</sup> Dr Watson later recorded<sup>2</sup> that he "was struck on the shoulder

<sup>1</sup> *A Study in Scarlet.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



by a jezail bullet, which shattered the bone and grazed the subclavian artery."

The steps from Maiwand to Baker Street have been skillfully and delightfully (one might add delicately) recorded by Dr Watson himself.

Mr H. W. Bell, in his scholarly "Note on Dr Watson's Wound,"<sup>3</sup> calls attention to the fact that in 1887 Dr Watson speaks of himself as "nursing his wounded leg," and adduces several other examples of Dr Watson's discomfort from his wounded "leg." In one of these examples, Watson describes himself as "a half-pay officer with a damaged *tendo Achillis*." . . . Mr Bell enumerates instances (between 1882 and 1895) in which Watson walked briskly, ran, rushed, dashed, and hurried; he then proceeds, in what seems to be a *non-sequitur*, to the statement that "these passages are ample proof that Watson was wounded in the heel and in the left shoulder." Would Watson's agility be a proof that he was wounded in the heel? The passages quoted by Mr Bell might seem to prove that, had Watson only one wound, that wound was in the shoulder; but surely they contribute nothing to the solution of the mystery of the second wound, except perhaps to weigh a little against the wounded *tendo Achillis* theory.

Mr Bell, in a footnote,<sup>4</sup> refers us to Miss Helen Simpson's "most interesting and plausible suggestion" that the second wound was inflicted by Watson upon himself when, as he told Miss Morstan later, he fired a double-barrelled tiger-cub at the musket which looked into his tent. Miss Simpson's suggestion is interesting, but rather whimsical and humorous than plausible. Indeed, I think it might in all fairness be described as a suggestion both whimsical and delicate. At all events, it is one to be dismissed from any

<sup>3</sup> *Baker Street Studies*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



## *The Mystery of the Second Wound*

serious attempt to solve the mystery of the second wound.

To return to Mr Bell's study for the moment: Watson is a medical man. He refers to his "leg" in one place, and in another to his *tendo Achillis*. Would a doctor refer to a wound in the *tendo Achillis* as a wound in the leg? "Heel" would be the word, one thinks.

Watson sustained two wounds: Of that there can be no doubt. He tells us exactly how he came by the first. The second he refers to vaguely, saying now that it is in his leg, now in his heel. WHERE WAS DR WATSON'S SECOND WOUND? "It did not prevent me from walking," he says;<sup>5</sup> yet it *handicapped* him in walking.<sup>6</sup>

Dr Watson was a man of considerable modesty. This fact stands out in all of his writings. He constantly played down his own part in the drama of Baker Street so that his hero might be thrown into still higher relief. Citations here are needless. Open any of his works at almost any page, and you will find examples of modesty. The commentator firmly believes that Dr Watson felt that in admitting one wound suffered for his country's cause, he was making a more than sufficiently romantic figure of himself. He shrank from admitting a second wound because a hero twice wounded would seem to him too much. But other matters contributed to his reticence, as we shall see.

Dr Watson himself gives us the definite clue that leads to the solution of the mystery of the second wound. Let us go back to Murray and Maiwand.<sup>7</sup> ". . . I was struck on the shoulder by a jezail bullet, which shattered the bone and grazed the subclavian artery. I should have fallen into the hands of the murderous Ghazis had it not been for the courage shown by Murray, my orderly, who threw me

<sup>5</sup> *The Sign of the Four*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *A Study in Scarlet*.



across a pack horse and succeeded in bringing me safely to the British lines."

Safely, that is, but for the second wound, of which Watson's modesty and delicacy forbade his making mention. A man "thrown across a pack horse" presents a singularly enticing target. His head and arms hang down on one side of the pack horse; his legs dangle on the other. The hinterlands of the Assistant-Surgeon Watson was the billet for the second jezail bullet. It was there he sustained his second wound. It would seem (as suggested above) that one wound—a shoulder wound—might be mentioned with modesty, decorum, and self-respect. A wound in the *Sitzenplatz* might suggest that the gallant doctor was not exactly "facing the foe," as a good soldier should. In any case, and this, one believes, counted even more heavily with Dr Watson, the mention of such a wound would be indelicate.

The case is clear. Watson's wound was a wound in the military sense. Had it been the result of an accident, as Miss Simpson contends, he would have said so. From the moment the jezail bullet entered his shoulder until he was received into the safety of the British lines, you have the only period in Watson's history as an army man in which it would have been possible for him to get that second wound.

"When you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth." <sup>8</sup> It is impossible that Watson could have sustained his second wound at any other time, in any other place, or in any other position. The exact location of the wound is thus fairly well defined.

Having thoughtlessly let slip the fact that he had sus-

<sup>8</sup> *The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier.*



### *The Mystery of the Second Wound*

tained a second wound, and because that wound did, on occasion, handicap him in walking, the modest Watson must have felt that "a wound in the leg" would be a plausible, if inexact, description of it.





## *Ballade of Watson in the Morning*

BY BELDEN WIGGLESWORTH

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“However, as you know, my habits are irregular.” Sherlock Holmes—*The Dying Detective*.

“I get up at all sorts of ungodly hours, and I am extremely lazy.” Dr Watson—*A Study in Scarlet*.

★ Whether Baker Street was foggy or fair,  
Snow-bound or by autumnal rains washed clean,  
Paradoxically life ran smoothly there,  
Because Sherlock Holmes had no set routine.  
But Watson indulged in slumber serene  
Till ungodly hours (he gave due warning—  
*A Study in Scarlet*). Yet one truth I’d glean:  
When did Watson get up in the morning?

Taking cocaine or filling the air  
With violin-chords to conquer his spleen,  
Time between problems he found a night-mare,  
Because Sherlock Holmes had no set routine.  
Army and medical training between  
Them made Watson (both professions adorning)  
“A seasoned campaigner,” *but* doubts intervene:  
When did Watson get up in the morning?

“Come, Watson, the game is afoot!” The flare  
Of a candle at dawn illumines the scene,



*Ballade of Watson in the Morning*

As Watson's awakened by his confrere  
(Because Sherlock Holmes had no set routine),  
But this is the rule's exception, I ween—  
Watson, the laggard, his record scorning.  
The problem's still with me, as always it's been:  
When did Watson get up in the morning?

L'ENVOI

With Baker Street's master no mystery's seen,  
Because Sherlock Holmes had no set routine.  
I ask, though reply dies ever a-borning:  
“*When* did Watson get up in the morning?”



## *Dr Watson's Christian Name*

BY DOROTHY L. SAYERS

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*The assumption that Dr Watson was christened "John Henry" is a fairly common one—it is taken rather for granted that this, under the law of averages, is what anyone signing himself "John H." would normally be called. Mr T. S. Blakeney has argued to the same conclusion against a background of abstruse historical suggestion, and while Mr H. W. Bell has effectively demolished Mr Blakeney's specific hypothesis, the assumption itself still persists. In the paper which follows, Miss Dorothy Sayers makes public for the first time her own brilliant speculations on this vital issue in the significant relationship it bears to the hitherto unexplained fact that Watson was known to his wife as "James." It is to be noted—although Miss Sayers does not make the point herself—that her viewpoint in this whole matter is understood to be shared by that excellent protagonist of the Holmesian method, Lord Peter Death Bredon Wimsey.*

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IT HAS ALWAYS been a matter of astonishment to Dr Watson's friends, and perhaps of a little malicious amusement to his detractors, to observe that his wife<sup>1</sup> apparently did

<sup>1</sup>His first wife, and only true love, Mary, née Morstan. There is a conspiracy a-foot to provide Watson with as many wives as Henry VIII, but, however this may be, only one is ever mentioned by him and only one left any abiding memory in his heart.



not know her own husband's name. There can be no possible doubt that Watson's first Christian name was "John." The name "John H. Watson" appears, conspicuously and in capital letters, on the title-page of *A Study in Scarlet*,<sup>2</sup> and it is not for one moment to be supposed that Watson, proudly contemplating the proofs of his first literary venture, would have allowed it to go forth into the world under a name that was not his. Yet, in 1891, we find Watson publishing the story of *The Man with the Twisted Lip*, in the course of which Mrs Watson refers to him as "James."

Mr H. W. Bell (*Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson*, p. 66, note 2) has been unable to account for this, and despairingly suggests that it is a mere printer's error. "Watson," he remarks, with much truth, "was a very careless reader of proof." But if he had read the proofs at all, this particular error could not have failed to catch his eye. A man's own name is a subject on which he is sensitive; nothing is more exasperating than to be "called out of one's name." Moreover, in December 1891, Mary Watson was still alive. Tenderly devoted as she was to her husband, she could not have failed to read his stories attentively on publication in the *Strand Magazine*, and she would have undoubtedly drawn his attention to an error so ridiculous and immediately reflecting on herself. In the month immediately preceding, the Doctor had made another trivial slip in connection with his wife's affairs; he said that during the period of the adventure of *The Five Orange Pips*, Mrs Watson was visiting her mother. Mrs Watson, who was, of course, an orphan (*The Sign of the Four*) evidently took pains to point out this error and see that the careless author

<sup>2</sup>It also appears, plainly marked in capitals, at the foot of the sketch plan illustrating *The Adventure of the Priory School* [in the *Strand* for February, 1904.—Ed.] and on the lid of the tin box at Cox's Bank (*The Problem of Thor Bridge*).



made a note of it; for on the publication of the collected *Adventures* in 1892, the word "mother" is duly corrected to "aunt."<sup>3</sup> On such dull matters as dates and historical facts, the dear woman would offer no comment, but on any detail affecting her domestic life she would pounce like a tigress. Yet the name "James" was left unaltered in all succeeding editions of the story.

How are we to explain this?

The solution is probably to be sought in a direction which has been too little explored by the commentators. In fact, the whole subject of Dr Watson's second Christian name has been treated with a levity and carelessness which are a positive disgrace to scholarship.

Mr S. C. Roberts (*Doctor Watson*, p. 9), suggests, without an atom of evidence, that Watson's mother was "a devout woman with Tractarian leanings," merely in order to presume that her son was named "John Henry" after the great Newman himself. If there were, in Dr Watson's character, the slightest trace of Tractarian sympathies, or even of strong anti-Tractarian sympathies, the suggestion might carry some weight, for no one could be brought up in an atmosphere of Tractarian fervour without reacting to it in one way or another. But Watson's religious views remain completely colourless. Of Holmes's beliefs we know a little, but of Dr Watson's, nothing. The hypothesis is purely frivolous.

Mr H. W. Bell, with his wonted scholarly caution, rejects the Newman theory. "It must be objected," he says (*Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson*, loc. cit.), "that Newman had become a Catholic in 1845, seven years before the date which Mr Roberts proposes for Watson's birth. If Mrs Wat-

<sup>3</sup>It appears from this that Watson, with a shyness not uncommon in authors, did not show his wife either his Ms. or his proofs. After publication he would probably leave the *Strand* carelessly lying about the house to be dutifully perused by Mary, to his deprecatory astonishment.



son had indeed had . . . Tractarian leanings, . . . she would hardly have named her son after the illustrious convert." But Mr Bell makes no effort to solve the problem himself, although this observation actually forms part of his note about the name "James." The true solution was staring him in the face, and if he had given the matter proper attention he must have seen it. But he dismissed "James" as a typographical error and went on his way, leaving the Watsons still enveloped in a cloud of ridicule.

Mr T. S. Blakeney behaves still more absurdly. Postulating a composite "James-John" authorship, he calls for a J. M. Robertson to "sift the accretions of the pseudo-Watson from the core of matter deriving solely from the hand of the veritable John Henry"—forgetting that John *Henry* Watson is even more conjectural than *Jesus* Barabbas, and thus making the fabulous name into a guarantee of the genuine identity. Illogicality could go no further.<sup>4</sup>

There is only one plain conclusion to be drawn from the facts. Only one name will reconcile the appellation "James" with the initial letter "H." The doctor's full name was "John Hamish Watson."

"Hamish" is, of course, the Scottish form of "James." There is no reason to feel any surprise that Dr Watson should bear a Scottish name. Sturdily and essentially English as he was, he may well, like most English people, have had a Scottish ancestor in his family tree. The English are probably the only people in the world who actually make a boast of mongrel ancestry. The words "hundred per cent English" are never heard on true English lips, for the English know well enough that their cross-breeding is their strength. Scotsmen, Welshmen, Irishmen, Jews, cling to

<sup>4</sup>It is only justice to add that Mr Roberts lost no time in pointing out this lamentable confusion between "objective data and legitimate surmise" and deprecating it with equal firmness and courtesy. *The Observer*, 30 Oct. 1932.



the purity of their descent, realising that to blend their nationality is to lose it. But English blood is so strong that one drop of it will make the whole blend English. A hundred Scottish ancestors, nay, even a Scottish mother, would in no way affect the indomitable Englishry of Dr Watson.

In fact, there is some slight evidence for a Scots strain in Watson. It may not be mere coincidence that led Holmes (a shrewd student of national character) to select the adjective "pawky" for the vein of humour which Watson displayed during the adventure of *The Valley of Fear* and which took his distinguished friend a little aback. Watson's mother may have been a Scot—not, I think, a Highland woman, but a native of Eastern Scotland<sup>5</sup>—and it may have pleased her to give a Scottish name to her son.<sup>6</sup>

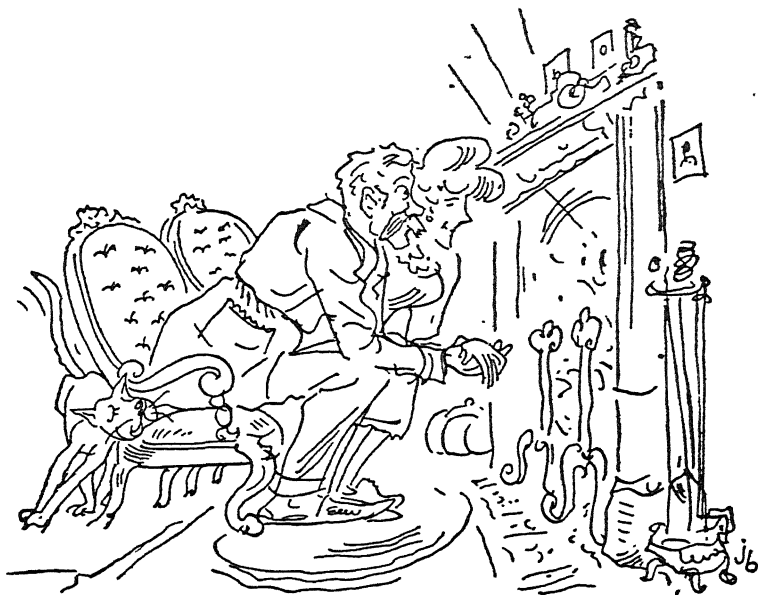
But there is no real need to assume Scottish descent to explain a Scottish name. The English, with their romantic love of the outlandish, their tendency to concoct a mixed genealogy for themselves, and their incurable disdain for other people's racial sensitiveness, are notorious for their habit of annexing foreign names, merely because they think them pretty or poetical. The suburbs of London swarm with Douglasses and Donalds, Malcolms and Ians whose ancestors never crossed the border, with Patricks and Brians and Sheilas who owe nothing to Erin, with Gwladyses whose names are spelt according to fancy and not to inheritance, and with other exotics still more remote. The combination "John Hamish Watson" has nothing about it that need disconcert us.

Nor is it at all unusual for a wife to call her husband by

<sup>5</sup> The true Highlander is a Celt—quick-tempered, poetical and humourless—everything that Watson was not. Dourness and pawkiness belong to the Aberdeen side of the country.

<sup>6</sup> Watson's father was also "H. Watson," but *his* name (whatever it was) was apparently given to his eldest son, Dr Watson's unsatisfactory brother, and it is unlikely that both brothers bore the same name. (*The Sign of the Four*)





his second name, in preference to his first. It is a pretty thought that he should be known to her by a name which is not the common property of the outside world. Possibly, Mrs Watson did not care for the name "John." It was painfully connected in her mind with Major John Sholto, who had helped to ruin her father and bring about his death. "Johnnie" would be open to the same objection; besides, no one with any sense of the fitting would call Dr Watson "Johnnie." There seems to be nothing specially objectionable about "Jack," but it may have seemed to her too flip-pant and jaunty. The probability, however, is that she preferred to cut out all association with "John." There remained the choice between "Hamish" and a pet-name. "Hamish" seemed to her perhaps a little high-falutin. By playfully re-Englishing it to "James" she found for her husband a pet-name which was his own name as well; a name by which no one else would think of calling him, a name free



from the tiresome skittishness of the ordinary pet-name, and a name eminently suitable to his solid and sober character.<sup>7</sup>

It would be natural enough that Dr Watson, accustomed for over three years to being called "James" by his wife, should automatically incorporate the name into his story when reproducing the dialogue between his Mary and himself—forgetting that, to the uninstructed reader, it might present an odd appearance. Nor would Mrs Watson correct it. To her, the doctor was "her James"; that she should be supposed to call him by any other name would seem to her unnatural, almost improper. Smilingly she perused the pages of the *Strand*, delighted to recognise herself and her home life accurately portrayed in all the glory of print.

<sup>7</sup> An interesting parallel case of the interchangeability of "James" and "Hamish" occurs in Mrs Henry Wood's novel *The Channings*: "The eldest son of the family, James; or, as he was invariably styled, Hamish." This book was extremely popular in the 'nineties, achieving its hundred-and-fortieth thousand in 1895, and may actually have suggested the idea to Mrs Watson.



# *Sonnet: Mary Morstan to J. H. Watson*

BY HELENE YUHASOVA

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Dear John, or James, I count my seventh pearl,  
And dearest of them all, that heart of oak  
You lost before me when, your head awlirl  
With Beaune and other things, we sat and spoke  
Of Agra's treasure and the land of Ind  
That day in Baker Street. I'll hold you, John,  
Or James, as close and fondly disciplined  
As ever woman held the man upon  
Whose faith her hopes are fixed. And yet  
You'll not be faithful to me, John or James—  
You'll put aside, without the least regret,  
The mem'ry of your long-remembered flames;  
You'll shun the courses and the pleasure-domes:  
But still you'll stray, alas—with Sherlock Holmes.



## *Thoughts on Seeing "The Hound of the Baskervilles" at the Cinema*

BY "EVOE"

---

"The stately Holmes of England, how beautiful he stood  
 Long, long ago in Baker Street—and still in Hollywood  
 He keeps the ancient flair for clues, the firm incisive chin,  
 The deerstalker, the dressing-gown, the shag, the violin.  
 But Watson, Dr Watson! How altered, how bewrayed  
 The fleet of foot, the warrior once, the faster than Lestrade!  
 What imbecile production, what madness of the moon  
 Has screened my glorious Watson as well nigh a buffoon?  
 Is this the face that went with Holmes on half a hundred  
     trips  
 Through nights of rain, by gig, by train; are these the eyes,  
     the lips?  
 These goggling eyes, these stammering lips, can these re-  
     veal the mind  
 How strong to tread where duty led, his practice cast be-  
     hind?  
 His not to reason why nor doubt the great detective's  
     plan—  
 The butt, maybe, of repartee yet still the perfect man,  
 Brave as the British lion is brave, brave as the buffalo,  
 What do they know of England who do not Watson know?  
 We have not many Sherlocks to sift the right from wrong  
 When evil stalks amongst us and craft and crime are strong;  
 Let not the Watsons fail us, the men of bull-dog mould,



*On Seeing "The Hound of the Baskervilles"*

Where still beneath the tight frock-coat beats on the heart  
of gold.

Watson, who dared the Demon Hound nor asked for fame  
nor fee,

Thou should'st be living at this hour. England hath need  
of thee!"

Thus did I muse and muse aloud while wondering at the  
flick

Till people near me turned and said, "Shut up, you make  
us sick."

I left and found a hansom cab, the last one left on earth,  
And, "Drive," cried I, "to Baker Street for all that you are  
worth!"







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# THE BAKER STREET SCENE

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*The Baker Street Scene extends from Abbas Parva and Abergavenny to Waterbeach and Yoxley Old Place; from Pondicherry Lodge to Pondicherry; from Lauriston Gardens to the Reichenbach Fall and on, happily, to the Sussex Downs. It is a universal, and not a local scene; for Sherlock Holmes went out, in physical fact or in the transports of his questing mind, to every corner of the globe—or else those corners came to him, through people and events, as he sat deific in his lodgings at the center of the globe itself.*

*It is with this scene, and with some of these people and events, that we have now to do. The room in Baker Street in which the master waited for the call of destiny is as familiar to us, almost, as any of our own. Its windows look out through the fog or rain or mellow sunshine on the houses in the street across the way. And there, in the room itself, is the fireplace with the sea-coals blazing on the hearth, and the easy chair with the coal-box by its side, and the Persian slipper close at hand. There on the mantle is the correspondence transfixcd by a jack-knife, and the dottles from the frequent pipes. The chemical-stained*



### *The Baker Street Scene*

*table, littered with papers and all sorts of odds and ends, stands in its accustomed place, and the pictures of General Gordon and Henry Ward Beecher lean against the wall. The great index volumes and the commonplace books are crammed upon the shelves; the violin lies carelessly upon the sofa, and the deerstalker cap is hanging on a peg by the door, at the top of the seventeen steps, as if awaiting urgent call to high adventure in some Limehouse alley or out upon the shivering moor. And, crowning touch of all, there on the table in the corner—there in all their simple dignity and nobility—are the Gasogene and Tantalus.*

*The Tantalus of course we know, for even in this unromantic age we still occasionally put our spirits in a clear decanter where the eye may see them, yet where they are under lock and key and out of reach of the eager hand and thirsty tongue. But the Gasogene is something else again. It is, we are told by the late Mr James Keddie, Sr., writing long ago in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, "a glass vessel shaped like a figure 8—the upper part being crowned with a handle and nozzle like a common, or beer-garden siphon, for swizzling soda-water into your whisky. The gasogene was loaded in its upper chamber with acid crystals and sodas and whatnot to generate gas, which passed into the lower chamber which was three parts filled with water. The gas generated in the upper chamber aerated the water in the lower chamber, and after a proper period had elapsed the gasogene simply became the siphon of every afternoon use. These contrivances had a habit of exploding, and I well remember a room in my father's house in which the wall paper was bejewelled with fine fragments of glass that had been embedded in it by such an explosion. The whole contrivance was enclosed in a wire netting, presumably to hold the fragments together when the burst came, but the smaller and more deadly pieces of*



### *The Baker Street Scene*

*glass shrapnel easily penetrated the mesh and anything within several feet of it."*

*The Gasogene and Tantalus, in their way, are the Baker Street Scene—but there is more to tell besides, and we may turn at this juncture for its telling to some of those who sat with Holmes and Watson by their fireside and watched with sympathetic eye what happened in the magic room and in the world that lay beyond its door.*



# *Sonnet on Baker Street*

BY CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

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Quick, Watson, quick! (he says) the game's afoot:  
 Perhaps it's only Scandal in Bohemia,  
 Or maybe Speckled Band, or Devil's Root,  
 Or famous sleuth who's dying of Anaemia—  
 The Dancing Men, Chicago's smartest crooks  
 Have given us the code: we'll fool that party:—  
 These are not merely episodes in books,  
 But the Crusade of Holmes and Moriarty.

So bring the fiddle and the dressing gown,  
 And Mrs Hudson, and brave Scotland Yard,  
 And Watson by the jezail bullet lamed—  
 We rattle in a hansom back to Town.  
 If this is fancy, history's debarred:  
 If this is fiction, let fact be ashamed.



## *The Long Road From Maiwand*

BY EDGAR W. SMITH

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*Historically, and in a strictly literal sense, the curtain went up on the Baker Street scene that magic day when Holmes and Watson cast their lot together and moved their respective belongings to the "comfortable bedrooms and single large airy sitting-room" at number 221B. It is held by virtually all Sherlockian scholars that this epic happening took place late in 1880 or early in 1881, and that the scarlet adventure in which the master and his disciple first stood side by side is therefore to be dated in the month of March of the latter year. To those who care little whether William the Conqueror landed at Pevensey in 1066 or 1067, or whether Shakespeare was born in 1563 or 1564, the conventional chronology erected on the shaky foundation of this too-blithe assumption will be readily accepted as involving an issue of no great consequence. But to those who have an innate passion for truth, and who believe that the whole truth demands the establishment of an accurate dating for the momentous event which marked the beginning of the Holmesian era, the evidence adduced below from the Sacred Writings themselves may well have strong appeal.*

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THE HIGHER CRITICISM has fixed the period of John H. Watson's historic encounter with Sherlock Holmes as late 1880 or early 1881. Watson himself mentions neither



month nor year in his account<sup>1</sup> of the infinite service young Stamford did him, but scholars who have delved profoundly in the other tales have brought evidence to light which appears, on its face, to establish the conclusion generally held. It seems admissible in all the circumstances, however, to view this evidence with a considerable degree of true Holmesian skepticism, and to test the conclusion itself in the crucible of mundane history and medical fact.

We know, from the canon, that Holmes revealed his profession to his fellow-lodger on "March the fourth." The critics have deduced, from various episodes throughout the tales which are more or less accurately dated—including the rather loose chronology of Jefferson Hope's confession—that this revelation came on March the fourth in the year 1881. Therefore, since Watson's introduction to Holmes could not have preceded the revelation by more than two or three months (in itself a violently arbitrary assumption), these critics say the meeting must have taken place sometime between November, 1880, and January, 1881.

It was, of course, in the beginning years of the ninth decade that the partnership was formed, but the evidence of internal and historical events occurring *prior* to the meeting tends irresistibly to the conclusion that it *could not possibly* have taken place within the period traditionally assigned. The earliest date consistent with any realistic interpretation of the precedent facts confronting us would be late in the summer of the year 1881.

Watson tells us in his own words<sup>2</sup> that he took his degree as doctor of medicine at the University of London in 1878, presumably at the age of 26. Determined upon a military career, he pursued his studies at Netley, and became attached to the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers, going out

1. *A Study in Scarlet.*

2. *A Study in Scarlet.*



## *The Long Road From Maiwand*

to join his regiment just as "the second Afghan war had broken out." He was detached to the Berkshires, and received his famous jezail bullet in the shoulder (or, as we are told elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> in the leg), in the battle of Maiwand.

This battle occurred, historically, on July 27, 1880. It must have been well into September or October of that year before Watson found himself convalescing from his wound in the base hospital at Peshawar,<sup>4</sup> and he was just beginning to drag himself about the corridors and to bask a little on the verandah when he was struck down anew by an attack of enteric fever, which endured "for months."<sup>5</sup> The course of the disease would have run until January, 1881, and, despite his avowed eagerness to return to England, it is improbable that the authorities allowed him to depart much before February or even March. It seems safe to say, therefore, that it was full in the spring of 1881 when the doctor landed at last on Portsmouth jetty.

A paternal Government had specified a period of nine months for an attempted recuperation of Watson's "irretrievably ruined" health, but this arrangement seems to have had no immediate bearing on what happened next. Gravitating to the "great cesspool" of London, as all loungers and idlers were wont to do, Watson arrived there no earlier, we must conclude, than the month of May, 1881—

3. *The Sign of the Four, The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor.*

4. If Watson was wounded both in the shoulder and in the leg, his convalescence might have taken even longer. It is easier to believe that he forgot to mention the leg-wound in *A Study in Scarlet* than it is to believe that he became confused later as to just what part of his anatomy it was that had been penetrated.

5. I am told by Dr Louis A. Hauser, of the staff of the New York Hospital, that the term "enteric fever," which is now obsolete, was used at the time of the Afghan wars to describe intestinal fevers generally, including the fever now designated as typhoid. The *bacillus typhosus* was not isolated by Eberth of Germany until the year 1880, but Dr Hauser feels, despite the lack of facilities for accurate diagnosis available in India at the time, that Watson's malady was certainly typhoid, and he believes, from the references made, that it might well have laid him low for three months.



### *The Baker Street Scene*

a date which is two months later than the accepted date of the revelation itself.

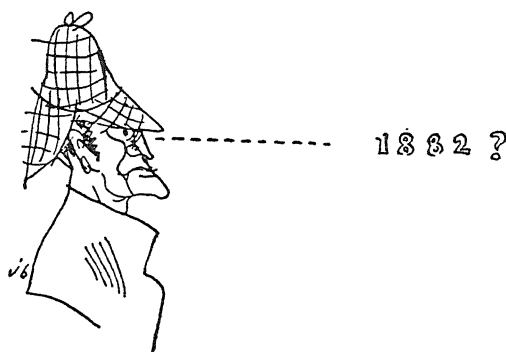
Watson tells us at this juncture that he stayed "for some time" at a private hotel in the Strand, probably softening his muscles and hardening his arteries, and certainly spending too much money. At length—and we can suspect, from our knowledge of his slow and plodding ways, that it was at very long length indeed—he made up his mind to seek a more economical way of life. And so, when the gods ordained his encounter with young Stamford in the Criterion bar, the door was opened at last to the beginning of his blessed liaison with Sherlock Holmes.

The removal to Baker Street, from this chain of events, can scarcely be dated before the autumn of 1881. To say that the meeting between Holmes and Watson took place between November, 1880, and January, 1881, is to stretch credulity far too far; for the series of happenings which began on July 27, 1880, included a bullet wound (or two bullet wounds), a convalescence, a bad case of typhoid fever, another convalescence, a long journey back to England, and an indefinite period of drifting and "reconstitution." The incidence of all of these happenings within the short space of four to six months would be a sheer physical impossibility: even the sprightliest of mortals—which Watson was not—could scarcely have accomplished so tedious a round in less than a year. We have the dictum of Sherlock Holmes himself<sup>6</sup> to fortify us in this conviction: ". . . when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth."

If we conclude, from the evidence adduced, that the meeting between Holmes and Watson took place no earlier than October or November in 1881, we must bring ourselves next to face the painful interval which elapsed be-

#### *6. The Sign of the Four.*





tween that time and the time Watson first learned the nature of his roommate's profession. Watson himself speaks of "weeks going by" <sup>7</sup> while his wondering was prolonged, and it is not beyond the bounds of probability that his fog of ignorance lasted from November, 1881, when he moved into the rooms, until March the fourth, 1882, when Holmes at last entrusted him with his secret. The date of March the fourth for the revelation is a fixture within whatever year is assigned to it; the period of ignorance cannot have been less than the "weeks" to which Watson refers; therefore the revelation must have come on March 4, 1882, and the meeting must have taken place long, but not too long, before that date. The month of November, 1881, fairly shouts itself from the housetops in answer.

There are some, of course, who, giving Watson's dilatory characteristics full weight, might contend that he did not come to his meeting with Holmes until the fall of 1882, and that he did not learn of his profession until March 4, 1883. The inclination must remain, however, to take the more conservative view that Watson was introduced to his destiny in November, 1881, and that he learned of Holmes's calling on March 4, 1882.

7. *A Study in Scarlet*.



## The Baker Street Scene

So, when the body of Enoch Drebber was found in the house in Lauriston Gardens, and John H. Watson's life really began, we can place him as a sober, settled man of thirty. As for Sherlock Holmes himself, despite the category of university student attributed to him by young Stamford, we have it from later evidence<sup>8</sup> that he was already in his twenty-ninth year. It was, indeed, full time for the two to meet. If either is to blame for the delay, and for the denial of other tales that another year or two together might have brought, it is on Watson's head that the onus must lie for having dallied so long by the side of the road that led at last to Baker Street.

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| The Canons  | The Conventional<br>Chronology | The Proposed<br>Chronology |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| "... I was removed from my brigade and attached to the Berkshires, with whom I served at the fatal battle of Maiwand ..."                               | July 27, 1880                  | July 27, 1880              |
| "Worn with pain ... I was removed ... to the base hospital at Peshawar. Here I rallied ... when I was struck down by enteric fever ..."                 | August, 1880                   | October, 1880              |
| "For months, my life was despaired of ..."  | September, 1880                | January, 1881              |
| "... when at last I came to myself and became convalescent ... a medical board determined that not a day should be lost in sending me back to England." | September, 1880                | March, 1881                |
| "I was dispatched, accordingly, in the troopship Orontes, and landed a month later on Portsmouth jetty."  | October, 1880                  | April, 1881                |
| "... I naturally gravitated to London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained."              | November, 1880                 | May, 1881                  |

### 8. *His Last Bow.*



## *The Long Road From Maiwand*

"There I stayed *for some time* at a private hotel in the Strand, leading a comfortless, meaningless existence."

December, 1880

August, 1881

"I began by making up my mind to take up quarters in some less pretentious and less expensive domicile. On the very day I had come to this conclusion, I was standing at the Criterion Bar . . .

"'Dr Watson, Mr Sherlock Holmes,' said Stamford, introducing us."

January, 1881

November, 1881

"*As the weeks went by*, my interest in him and my curiosity as to his aims in life *gradually* deepened and increased . . . I eagerly hailed the little mystery which hung about my companion, and spent much of my time in endeavoring to unravel it . . . It was upon the 4th of March . . . 'Well, I have a trade of my own. I suppose I am the only one in the world. I'm a consulting detective . . .'"

March 4, 1881

March 4, 1882



## *The Singular Adventures of Martha Hudson*

BY VINCENT STARRETT

---

*Of all the men and women who walked and talked with Holmes and Watson, none had an intimate and continuing relationship to compare with that enjoyed by Mrs Hudson, the faithful and long-suffering landlady of 221B. Mr Vincent Starrett, who surely must have lodged for many moons himself in Baker Street, gives us this feeling picture of a devoted woman who served the master not only in the heyday of his fame, but also in the later and less eventful years of his retirement on the Sussex Downs.*

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IT RAINED in London through the night of March 3, 1881; by the morning of the fourth the streets were sloppy and depressing. Some fog was abroad, and "a dun-colored veil hung over the house-tops, looking like the reflection of the mud-colored streets beneath."<sup>1</sup> An Acherontic sort of morning, all in all, and to Mrs Hudson, standing at her window, at No. 221B, Baker Street, it may well have seemed that something harrowing and revelatory was about to happen—or indeed was in the act of happening all round her. That disturbing consciousness of singular events in prospect and proximity! For some weeks now she had been mildly wondering about her curious lodgers, in particular the tall one, with the thin hawkbill of a nose and eyes set close together in a high-domed head.

<sup>1</sup> *A Study in Scarlet.*



## *The Singular Adventures of Martha Hudson*

Conceivably, she only shrugged—observing that the day was cloudy—and turned her attention to something in the oven. But if the mood of doubt existed it must have deepened by the morning of the fifth. By that time the impending drama had begun to run its course. Used as she was becoming to the nondescript individuals who visited Mr Sherlock Holmes, she had not until that morning set eyes upon the Baker Street division of the detective police force, and the sudden intrusion of a half dozen disreputable street Arabs must have given the good woman pause. Their pattering footsteps on the stairs were accompanied by audible expression of her disgust. What thoughts, one wonders, did she at that moment think about her principal lodger?

Thereafter came Gregson, of the Yard, taking the long flight three steps at a time, after almost pulling out the doorbell, and on his heels the sallow, rat-faced Lestrade, his garments untidy and disarranged. And then, immediately, the significant request of Dr Watson for the sick terrier. To Martha Hudson, below stairs, it must have seemed that odd events were transpiring in the chamber overhead. One fancies her, at that moment, plump and puzzled, standing beside the stair-foot. Her dark brows are met in a frown, as she cocks her best ear upward. She is bending forward, her hands upon her hips. Does she catch a fragment of the conversation? Perhaps the strident voice of Sherlock Holmes, pausing in his eternal tramping up and down the room?

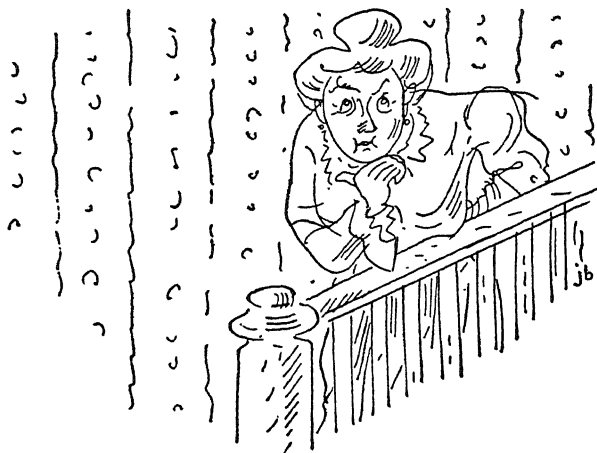
*"There will be no more murders!"*

Then, as she waits and listens, again the doorbell rings. It is young Wiggins, the leader of the ragged urchins, come with the missing cabman. Each in his turn mounts upward, and the door of destiny closes behind them. At the stair-foot Martha Hudson sniffs and turns away, then stops, appalled.



### *The Baker Street Scene*

A crash has sounded from the room above that seems to shake the building. Feet pound upon the floor and cries of fury filter through the ceiling. A desperate struggle is in progress, marked by every evidence of violence. And Martha Hudson, cowering against her door-frame, listens to the



deadly scuffle with consternation and dismay. Her blood has turned to water, and she is weak with terror; yet in her bewildered mind she checks the values of furnishings now crashing to the floor against the possibilities of their replacement by the villains responsible.

Ought she to send for the police? Yet Gregson and Lestrade were of the police, as possibly she may have known. One views her there, upon that morning—frightened, indignant, with heaving bosom and disordered mind, waiting the final, unpredictable catastrophe. An obscure, heroic figure on the outer rim of terrifying drama. Good soul, her direst secret fears at length have been realized. She had always known, one thinks, that something terrible would



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happen with that man in the house. And mingled perhaps with her alarm there is a little sense of satisfaction, of fearful triumph, that her predictions have been fulfilled.

In some such fashion, at any rate, must Mrs Hudson, housekeeper to Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, have come to a clear knowledge of her principal lodger's profession. There is no record that she was ever told, and, if she was, she can have had—until that terrific episode—no notion of what the simple words portended. Watson himself had been told only the day before. One hopes that Holmes, on his way downstairs with the prisoner a little later, stopped long enough to allay her natural fears, and it is likely that he did, since he and Watson were permitted to remain upon the premises. There can be little doubt that Holmes made good the damage wrought by Jefferson Hope.

In this first instance of the dangerous nature of the detective's employment, as it touched her own existence, Mrs Hudson may well have sensed a chapter of adventures that would have frightened an ordinary woman into another line of business. It is perhaps a permissible deduction that already she had been for some years letting out her rooms to curious customers, and was not unacquainted with the difficulties of the London landlady. However that may be, it has long been certain that she was not an ordinary woman. A young widow, one imagines her to have been, who took up commercial housekeeping when the experiment of marriage was in some way tragically ended. But no whisper of her life before that day in 1881, when Holmes first called upon her, has ever been revealed. The notion persists that she had been unhappy; she kept so very still about it all.

That first occasion taught her, we may suppose, what she might expect of Sherlock Holmes. Yet some time was to elapse, one thinks, before he actually ventured upon revolver practice in his living room—decorating the wall



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with "a patriotic V.R. done in bullet-pocks"—and it is probable that this diversion was not too frequent. A certain *rapprochement* would seem to be indicated, as between the two, before such queerish pastimes could be tolerated—an understanding based on faith and works; at least, a feeling of certainty on the part of Martha Hudson that her curious lodger was able and willing to pay for a new wall, if necessary. Other and various scenes of violence and disorder must have occurred to prepare her for that first patriotic fusillade; yet even so it must have come upon her with a sense of shock. Loud voices, heavy falls, the crash of glass and table furnishings, even the noisome odors of experiments usually conducted in a laboratory—such matters may become in time part of the casual daily routine of existence; but shooting is always a little dangerous and startling.

One faintly wonders about the living-room wall. That it was a substantial piece of building is rather certain: solid beams of oak, perhaps, under a paper about whose pattern, save for Holmes's shooting, Watson has chosen to be reticent. It seems unlikely, however, that Holmes—a man of an original turn of mind—confined himself to a single set of initials, however appropriate. There were other monograms, no doubt, which Watson simply failed to mention. Mrs Hudson, we may be sure, mentioned them on numerous occasions before the rattle of her lodger's patriotic gunfire became familiar.

But in time she probably told herself—and others—that nothing now that Mr Holmes could do would ever surprise her. After the first episode of the Boxer cartridges there can be little doubt that she was prepared for anything. And one fancies that she came in time to like the perilous uncertainty of her position. There are persons who live with equanimity upon the slopes of a volcano, enjoying the threat of danger that hangs over them. After an eruption they return and build their homes anew, upon the very



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spot from which they were dislodged. So, possibly, it was with Mrs Hudson. And, too, she was a part of that never-ending operation against the forces of evil—a reflection in which, as an honest woman, she must have found some satisfaction. Even some pride.

One does not minimize the genuine affection she came in time to have for Holmes and Watson; an affection shared, as she may have suspected, by some millions of the doctor's readers, any one of whom would have been happy to change places with her. And if her orderly soul was dismayed by cigars in the coal-scuttle and tobacco in the toe-end of a Persian slipper, her protests in time, we may be certain, became mere humorous sallies which were responded to in kind. The sight of the detective's unanswered correspondence, transfixed by a jack-knife in the center of his wooden mantelpiece, may have distressed her in the early days of his probation, but such vagaries—after a year or two—probably troubled her less than they troubled Watson, who had to live with them.

Her habits, at the beginning of the relationship, were probably more or less fixed. They changed, perhaps, or were adapted to her lodgers', as the years wore on. Apparently she went to bed about eleven, an hour after the maid. Waiting for Holmes to return from his pursuit of the mysterious old crone, in the course of the Lauriston Gardens investigation, Watson heard her "stately tread" as it passed the living-room door. And presumably she rose early enough to satisfy Holmes and the doctor, who were not notoriously early risers. For all of them, it is clear, 7:15 was a bit unearthly, on a cold spring morning. It was at that hour, early in April, 1883, that Watson blinked up at Holmes from his warm island of bedclothing and learned that Miss Helen Stoner had arrived from Stoke Moran, on the western border of Surrey.

Holmes obviously felt that an apology was in order.



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"Very sorry to knock you up, Watson," he said, "but it's the common lot this morning. Mrs Hudson has been knocked up, she retorted upon me, and I on you."

But Mrs Hudson had been affable enough; she had hurried down to light the fire and boil a pot of coffee. Watson, good fellow, was inclined to be a trifle curt until he had his coffee, a circumstance that possibly she remembered.

During the evenings she was visited by her cronies. How numerous these were we cannot be certain, but they were numerous enough for a ring at the doorbell, on a stormy night, to suggest one such—rather than a client—to Sherlock Holmes. His conjecture that John Openshaw, whose ring had interrupted an evening of cross-indexing, was "likely to be some crony of the landlady's," was not, of course, borne out by fact; but it was a significant remark. No landlady is without her cronies, and we may be certain that the landlady of Sherlock Holmes had cronies by the score. Her tales of her astonishing lodger and his companion must have made good telling for the shivering, envious women who sipped at tea or coffee with Mrs Hudson—did they call her 'Udson?—of No. 221B, Baker Street. Watson himself, one ventures, told no more harrowing stories of prowess and of peril than Martha Hudson to her satellites.

Her staff, during the early days, was not a large one. There was a servant—alternatively called "the maid"—and just possibly a page in buttons; or it may be that the page was taken on a little later. His first recorded appearance, viewing the narratives in their chronological order, is in Watson's account of *The Yellow Face*, an episode dated in the month of April, 1882. It is possible that he was employed some months after the advent of the detective and the doctor, at a time when the increasing number of visitors, calling upon Mr Sherlock Holmes, too frequently snatched the maid and Mrs Hudson from their



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necessary household duties. Just conceivably he was a bit of swank on the part of Mrs Hudson, who may well have looked forward to a time when she could afford a page, like other and more prosperous landladies. However that may be, he is not to be confused with a later page, called Billy, for whom Holmes entertained a considerable affection.

The establishment, then, was relatively small, and in all charity one cannot imagine Mrs Hudson or her maid to have been overworked. There were no other lodgers, we may be sure, at any time. Had there been others, Holmes would surely have complained of them (or they of him), and we should have some record of them in Watson's pages. Holmes and Watson themselves, of course, made work enough, but Mrs Hudson's labors cannot at any time have been excessive. The famous living room, after all, was somewhat sacrosanct. From time to time, no doubt, the maid was allowed to enter—possibly under the watchful eye of Mrs Hudson—for an imperative cleansing, but this would be only when the sternest necessity demanded it. Watson, in all likelihood, was agreeable enough to intrusion, but Holmes would not have cared to have domestics messing up his household gods. That the chamber was perennially untidy is one of the soundest of our certainties. One fancies Watson as making shift to keep the place in order, but there is a clear record of his despair. The principal duties of the maid, then, upstairs, it may be ventured, was making up the beds.

Throughout all of the Watsonian text there is the distinct suggestion that Mrs Hudson did the cooking. Holmes bragged a little, in *The Sign of the Four*, about his "merits as a housekeeper"; but it was Mrs Hudson, one feels certain, who cooked the oysters and the grouse. They were to be "ready in half an hour." Holmes merely ordered them from the shop—presumably while wearing a disguise de-



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scribed by Watson as suggesting "a respectable master mariner who had fallen into years and poverty." And it was quite certainly Mrs Hudson who prepared the woodcock, during the excitements of the detective's search for the Blue Carbuncle. In view of the circumstances of that curious adventure, it will be remembered, Holmes thought of asking her to examine the bird's crop. This, to be sure, was after Watson had left his companion for a wife, but there is small reason to suppose that Mrs Hudson gave over the task of cooking after the doctor's departure. Holmes dined at seven, in those days, he told his friend, when inviting him to return; although in point of fact it was considerably later before they actually got around to woodcock.

This admirable bird, incidentally, would appear to have been a favorite with Holmes. Among the ingredients of the "epicurean little cold supper" arranged by him for Lord St. Simon and the Moultons, some years earlier, were a "couple of brace of cold woodcock, a pheasant, a *pâté-de-fois-gras* pie, with a group of ancient and cobwebby bottles." Mrs Hudson had no hand in that proceeding, however; the dishes were from a confectioner's. They arrived during the detective's absence, greatly to the surprise of Watson. It is, of course, conceivable that Mrs Hudson was away during the afternoon and evening of this event; but a more likely explanation is that Holmes—often a singularly thoughtful man—did not care to burden her with such an extensive and luxurious repast. It is also conceivable that he did not believe her quite up to such a spread: a supper for a noble bachelor is, after all, a supper for a noble bachelor. Sherlock Holmes had his own idea of Mrs Hudson's abilities in a culinary way. In the final episode of *The Naval Treaty* she rose to an occasion and produced, in addition to ham and eggs, a dish of curried chicken for Percy Phelps's breakfast. "Her cuisine is a little limited,"



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the detective testified on that occasion; "but she has as good an idea of breakfast as a Scotchwoman."

On the whole, it would appear that Mrs Hudson was at her best where a breakfast was concerned; her staples were ham and eggs, with toast and coffee. These she prepared entirely to the liking of her lodgers, and, as we have seen, she was capable of rising to an occasion. When something more elaborate than curried chicken seemed to be in order, Holmes took the matter into his own hands and some confectioner was benefited. Nevertheless, she could prepare the traditional roast of beef, and did occasionally prepare it; it stood, when cold, upon the collaborators' sideboard until, presumably, they indicated that they were through with it. Fortunately for Holmes, there was a cold joint on hand during his investigation of the disappearance of the Beryl Coronet. It saved him from going hungry throughout an arduous afternoon and evening.

But it is to be remembered that Holmes and Watson frequently dined out. In particular was this likely to be the case after some rather special triumph; and the strong probability is that Mrs Hudson prepared no dinners without previous orders. If Holmes planned to dine at home, one evening, no doubt when possible he told her of his intention. When he failed to leave instructions, he took pot luck from the sideboard or hunted up a restaurant. "Dinner for two as soon as possible," was his order at the conclusion of the adventure of *The Mazarin Stone*; but it was probably something from the sideboard.

Tea was, from time to time, a pleasant possibility in the day's events, but for the most part the two men were well occupied from breakfast through to dinner, and even later. From the point of view of Mrs Hudson the arrangement, all in all, may not have been the best imaginable, but, in the circumstances, it was the only arrangement possible.



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Complicating even the simple routine of breakfast was the fact that Holmes rose fairly late, save where he was roused untimely, while Watson rose conspicuously later. Frequently as we see the friends together at the breakfast table—a pleasant tryst, and a favorite scene with most of the doctor's readers—it was actually not often that they entirely synchronized. Often Watson came down to find Holmes gone about his business, and at best it was his habit to enter the scene to the last rattle of his companion's coffee cup. Triumphant indeed must have been an occasion when Watson finished before Holmes; one such is recorded in the opening lines of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Sherlock Holmes, as we behold him, is still seated at the breakfast table, while Watson stands upon the hearth-rug, examining the handsome stick left by Dr James Mortimer the night before. Obviously he has already finished, and in the warm glow of comfortable satiety he dares to venture some pregnant observations of his own.

But the whole business of breakfast must often have been a little trying for Mrs Hudson.

Years later, the faintest possible clue emerges from Watson's text to indicate a change in the Baker Street domestic staff. In the opening scene of *The Problem of Thor Bridge*, dated by inference in the early days of October, 1900, two hard-boiled eggs suggest to Sherlock Holmes a certain division of interest on the part of a new cook. A *new cook*—the words are clearly printed in the record. But a new cook suggests an old cook, now vanished from the scene. And the original cook was certainly Mrs Hudson. It is a disturbing hint, and it is obvious only that somewhere along the years a cook was taken into the household, who was in turn supplanted by another. The probability is that the first one appeared at a time when Mrs Hudson believed herself to be becoming prosperous. Somewhere along in 1888, perhaps? By that time—we have Watson's word for it—



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Holmes's payments to his landlady had become quite "princely."

There is much for which we must always be grateful to Watson. He told what seemed to him important. But it never crossed his mind that we should ever care to know the exits and entrances of Baker Street domestics. Yet as more and more the interest of the world centers upon the life of Mr Sherlock Holmes, every item of his association becomes enchanting. It is possible to regret the doctor's reticence about the humbler lives that toiled obscurely in the echo of that sonorous reputation.

About the page, for instance. He had his uses. He held the door for those who had business with Mr Sherlock Holmes, and for those with whom Holmes had business. He held the door for clients entering and prisoners departing. It was an exciting enough existence for a lad. Two pages, at least, are indicated during the public career of the detective, and the last and best of them was Billy. His first appearance, unless Watson is confused, was some time prior to the adventure called *The Valley of Fear*, in which episode, as recorded, he is already on the job. It was Billy, we are told, who showed Inspector MacDonald into the collaborators' living room. That was in January, 1887, and, as late as the summer of 1903—a long stretch—he was still apparently upon the premises. In that year and season he greeted Watson, in the opening scenes of *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone*, and made a significant remark. Watson, noting the dummy of the detective in the window, observed, according to the record: "We used something of the sort once before"—an obvious reference to the adventure of *The Empty House*, which occurred in April, 1894. And Billy replied that *that* had been before his time.

It is immediately evident that Watson *was* confused when he recorded the circumstances of MacDonald's arrival in 1887. In this matter we may safely trust to Billy,



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who would have a clearer memory of his employment than would the doctor. Unless, indeed, the earlier page was also called Billy; in which case it is difficult to see how the problem can be settled without greater confusion than already exists. In *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*, however, one of Holmes's cases that followed *The Valley of Fear* by only a few months, it was "our page-boy," in Watson's words, who threw open the door to announce Lord Robert St. Simon; there was no mention of any Billy. Nor was there in the earlier record of *The Yellow Face*, an odd mystery that came to Holmes in the spring of 1882. But it was clearly Billy who, on October 4, 1900, ushered Mr Marlow Bates into the presence.

The actual change of pages took place, one fancies, some time after the adventure of *Shoscombe Old Place*, which occurred in the early summer of 1897; in Watson's account of that curious episode the page-boy is still nameless. The final proof would seem to lie in the doctor's record of 1903, at which time Billy was still "the young but very wise and tactful page, who had helped a little to fill up the gap of loneliness and isolation which surrounded the saturnine figure of the great detective." In spite of the "third person" form of narrative, the quoted words are too clearly Watson's own for any doubt to exist about their authorship. It is notorious that by January, 1903, he had remarried, and the complacent utterance is precisely what he would have thought about the predicament of Holmes, after a few months' of separation.

But in spite of the presence of a page upon the premises, it was Mrs Hudson herself who frequently announced the detective's visitors. There must have been some system about the matter, a private one that functioned consistently but without conscious thought, perhaps, in her interesting mind. Class consciousness, one thinks, had some bearing on the matter. Martha Hudson, a loyal and de-



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voted servant of an indubitably higher type, was unquestionably a bit of a snob. Her exclamations of disgust, twice recorded, at the boisterous entrance of the ragged urchins led by Wiggins, are sufficient in themselves to urge the point; but it is her conduct in the instances of distinguished visitors that betrays her. These she ushered up the stairs herself, and bowed them through the door. The case of Lady Hilda Trelawney Hope is typical; her card preceded her, majestically, upon the brass salver. And immediately before the Lady Hilda there had been the illustrious Lord Bellinger himself—"twice Premier of Britain." Such things were always happening. Watson would have been "guilty of an indiscretion" if he had even hinted at the identity of some of the illustrious clients who crossed the humble threshold in Baker Street, during the one year 1895. There is small question that Mrs Hudson handled all such in person.

If the King of Bohemia appears to be an instance to the contrary—he climbed the steps in solitary splendor and rapped authoritatively on the door—it is to be remembered that, for all the richness of his attire, he was a rather terrifying figure, even for *fin-de-siècle* London, and it is probable that he snapped on his black vizard mask a little earlier than Watson thought. The doctor's deduction that he had adjusted it outside the living-room door, because "his hand was still raised to it as he entered," is plausible and ingenious, but not necessarily the fact. He may simply have been testing it for security at that highly secret moment. To Mrs Hudson he may well have seemed some wild bandit from the Balkans.

As summing up this amusing situation in the household, it may be suggested that where visitors or clients were of sufficient importance to warrant her personal attendance, Mrs Hudson personally attended. For the rest, with exceptions, a humbler servant was quite good enough. Many, in-



deed, had no attendance at all, after the outer door had been successfully negotiated; they climbed the seventeen steps alone, and knocked with their own knuckles. Where a visitor was familiar this was, of course, the rule. Hopkins, for instance, was allowed to go straight up, at any hour; as was the portly Mycroft, although he did not often attend upon his brother. In exceptional instances visitors were even allowed to enter the room in the absence of its tenants—a reckless business at best; but it is likely that by the case of Dr Percy Trevelyan Mrs Hudson's uncanny shrewdness in such decisions is attested. A "pale, taper-faced man with sandy whiskers," a haggard expression, and an unhealthy complexion, there can have been little enough about Trevelyan's outward appearance to recommend him. Holmes himself perhaps was hardly more apt at rapid diagnosis of a stranger than Mrs Hudson on her outer threshold. What he caught by observation and deduction may have been little more, in substance, than that revealed to her by intuition. It is proverbial that landladies are that way.

As somewhat qualifying this view of Martha Hudson—this suggestion of a certain snobbishness, which in no wise detracted from her fundamental kindness and amiability—it may be ventured that she was a woman of curiosity; that is, she was a woman. There can be no doubt that she was a witness to some strange, impulsive entrances and some remarkable exits. That her extraordinary lodgers fascinated her, from the beginning of the long association to its end, is certain. It follows that where curiosity struggled with decorum, she would frequently indulge her curiosity. One fancies that she appeared at times with visitors of less importance than impatience, for no reason other than that their behavior roused her interest. Did she ever listen outside the door? The suspicion is uncharitable and unworthy, and probably entirely justified. Just for an instant perhaps



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—a moment—after the barrier had been closed, to catch the opening lines of the drama? Perhaps to verify her own conjecture that *this* was a saddening case of lovers parted? And this natural curiosity would mildly operate with reference to the living room. The very circumstance that her duties ended, for the most part, on the threshold, would make her the more eager to cross over. The room itself was somewhat of a mystery, chaotically filled as it was with the detective's souvenirs of crime and comfort. For one reason and another, then, one thinks that Mrs Hudson liked occasionally to get past the door, just to see what was going on. And while direct evidence is lacking, one thinks that she was not above a little innocent eavesdropping.

They were all busy enough, heaven knows—maid, page and landlady—showing people up, or simply answering the doorbell. The doctor's narratives are filled with the tramp of feet upon the stairs. And it is certain that the bell rang many times in the course of a single morning and afternoon. When Watson, waiting in the rooms for his friend's return from an investigation, tells us that "every time a knock came to the door" he imagined it to be Holmes returning, he tells us also, by inference, that there were many knocks. Letters and cablegrams and newspapers were constantly arriving, particularly newspapers; one gathers that every new edition found its way into the consulting room. And coffee went up the stairs at almost mathematical intervals. No wonder there was a page-boy and a maid, and even so it is probable that Mrs Hudson kept her flesh down somewhat, with her constant climbing. "From the years 1894 to 1901 inclusive, Mr Sherlock Holmes was a very busy man," reports the doctor, in the opening sentence of his account of *The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist*; but almost equally busy, we may be sure, was Mrs Hudson and her little staff of servants.

It is not surprising that she went to bed about eleven,



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and she was quite definitely between the blankets on that stormy night in late November, 1894, when Hopkins's cab-wheel grated against the curb. It was Watson who had to let the inspector in. "Run down, my dear fellow, and open the door," said Sherlock Holmes, on that occasion, "for all virtuous folk have been long in bed." That was the night they put up Hopkins on the sofa, in preparation for an early start, next morning, for Yoxley Old Place. There was a train at six from Charing Cross to Chatham, and the humane Holmes did not rouse his slumbering landlady. They had coffee brewed on the detective's spirit-lamp.

In Watson's sprightly narrative called *The Adventure of the Dying Detective* we have perhaps our clearest view of Mrs Hudson, as she existed for the doctor. She was, he tells us in his first sentence, "a long-suffering woman. Not only," he continues, "was her first-floor flat invaded at all hours by throngs of singular and often undesirable characters, but her remarkable lodger showed an eccentricity and irregularity in his life which must have sorely tried her patience. His incredible untidiness, his addiction to music at strange hours, his occasional revolver practice within doors, his weird and often malodorous scientific experiments, and the atmosphere of violence and danger which hung around him made him the very worst tenant in London."

One can hardly question the characterization either of Holmes or Mrs Hudson.

"On the other hand," proceeds the doctor, as if it explained everything, "his payments were princely. I have no doubt that the house might have been purchased at the price which Holmes paid for his rooms during the years that I was with him."

That is an assertion that opens up a subject with which we have no immediate concern—the matter of Holmes's



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profits. As it relates to the rental paid by the detective, it is possibly more extravagant than significant. The impecunious Watson was no judge of what was princely. It is clear, however, that Holmes paid his landlady a decent sum of money, perhaps monthly, perhaps semi-monthly, and it may be assumed that Watson thought the sum excessive. It would be idle to deny that the circumstance had some relation to the detective's continued tenancy of the rooms, and to Mrs Hudson's regard for him. Certainly it is not the whole story, as Watson presently admits: "The landlady stood in the deepest awe of him," he tells us, "and never dared to interfere with him, however outrageous his proceedings might seem"; *but*, "she was fond of him, too," he confesses, "for he had a remarkable gentleness and courtesy in his dealings with women."

And a little later: "Knowing how genuine was her regard for him, I listened earnestly to her story when she came to my rooms in the second year of my married life and told me of the sad condition to which my poor friend was reduced."

Whatever Mrs Hudson's awe of Sherlock Holmes, and no doubt it continued throughout the years, her sincere affection for him cannot be questioned. She believed him to be dying, when she rushed off to Watson on that November day in 1888. For three days she had seen him sinking, while he refused to allow her to call in a doctor, and her agitation was profound. Watson was horrified, and they drove back together to the rooms in Baker Street, Mrs Hudson explaining all the way. "You know how masterful he is," she said. "I didn't dare to disobey him." Yet, "with your leave or without it, Mr Holmes," she had told him at last, "I am going for a doctor this very hour." It was not alone concern for a profitable lodger that dictated her decision. When Watson emerged from the sick-room she



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"was waiting, trembling and weeping, in the passage." It is certain that she had been there throughout the entire scene within.

More than a year before, her affectionate concern for Holmes had been evident. During the excitements of the search for the Andaman Islander, she had been worried about the detective's health, and had even ventured—with a doctor in the house—to prescribe "a cooling medicine."

She would appear always to have been in excellent health herself. Possibly Watson looked after any small disorders that afflicted her while he was a partner in the firm, but a landlady with a cooling medicine in her cupboard would have her own ways of looking after her health. What she thought of Holmes's drug habits, until he abandoned them, is nowhere revealed, and the strong probability is that she never suspected them.

It is not strange that Holmes—in 1888—failed to take her into his confidence in the little comedy of *The Dying Detective*; in such dangerous matters he played a lone hand, and very properly so. In smaller deceptions he made flattering use of her, as in the last scene of the adventure recorded as *The Naval Treaty*, when she conspired with him to serve up the missing papers under a breakfast cover. This innocent hoax tickled her immensely, one likes to think. To have a hand in any of her favorite lodger's enterprises must always have pleased her. Her sense of humor is not anywhere revealed as notable, however, and it is likely that it did not often rise above complicity in some such trickery as the episode of the naval papers. Doubtless there were a number of little pleasantries about the Persian slipper and the coal-scuttle, and doubtless they became a bit familiar with repetition.

But the actual *adventures* of Mrs Hudson were for a number of years merely emotional states of heart and mind



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occasioned by the rumblings of the volcano on whose slopes she lived. They were lightning flashes on a horizon that was sometimes far off and sometimes close at hand. They were sounds and apprehensions from the living room above; swift pictures of detective-inspectors arriving in haste and prisoners departing under duress; sinister figures on the doorstep. They were, in brief, the emanations from that atmosphere of violence and danger which made Mr Sherlock Holmes, in Watson's considered phrase, "the very worst tenant in London." They were also, of course, the adventures in anticipation, as it were, of the innocent bystander, who—after all—is quite likely to be hurt in any disturbance of which he makes himself a part. Mrs Hudson's adventures, in the more literal meaning of the word, possibly began with the determination of Professor Moriarty to discourage the attentions of Mr Sherlock Holmes.

"No great harm was done" the rooms in Baker Street, we are told, by the fire started there by Moriarty's agents, on a night in April, 1891, but the shock to Mrs Hudson must have been considerable. We have no report of the actual damage done, other than Holmes's laconic comment. The newspapers of the following day carried an account of the outrage, from which it would appear that Holmes derived his own information. He was not in the rooms when they were fired, and Watson was at that time married and gone domestic ways. Unless she had a crony in, Mrs Hudson was alone with her miniature staff of servants, and as such enterprises as arson are carried out at secret hours, the presumption is that they were all in bed. A pretty disturbance they must have had, and Mrs Hudson undoubtedly sat up the rest of the night.

Thereafter came the tidings of Holmes's death in Switzerland.

"It is with a heavy heart that I take up my pen to write



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these last words in which I shall ever record the singular gifts by which my friend Mr Sherlock Holmes was distinguished," wrote Watson, in beginning his account of *The Final Problem*. His heart, we may be sure, was no heavier than that of Martha Hudson. Only Mycroft, of the intimate circle, knew that Holmes survived, and what sentimental tale he told his brother's sorrowing housekeeper, to account for keeping up the rooms in Baker Street, we may only surmise. But it is quite possible that the admirable creature would have kept them up herself, merely for auld lang syne. One can imagine the tales with which she edified her cronies, during the three years of the detective's absence. And her melancholy perambulations of the famous living room, now at last wide open—like a museum—for her inspection.

But if she mourned for Holmes after the tidings of his death, the shock of his return produced an emotional disturbance even more intense; it threw her into violent hysterics. Small wonder, of course: Watson himself, a little later, fainted for the first and last time in his life. Resurrection must always, one fancies, occasion dramatics more spectacular than the more familiar phenomenon of death. But she recovered from her shock when she realized that Holmes had need of her, and the adventure which followed was one of the high spots of Martha Hudson's life of service.

Holmes's plans had been quickly made. The remaining members of the gang, whose leader lay dead beneath the Reichenbach, knew that he had returned. Unknown to Mrs Hudson, although probably suspected by brother Mycroft, they had watched the rooms with unceasing hatred, after his disappearance, knowing that some day he would return. Incidentally, it is obvious that more of them escaped the police net than Scotland Yard admitted in its telegram to Holmes in Switzerland.

In the capture of the desperate Colonel Sebastian Moran,



*The Singular Adventures of Martha Hudson*

Moriarty's underling, Mrs Hudson played her part with intelligence and courage. Eight times in the course of two hours, while Holmes and Watson waited in the empty house across the way, the silhouetted shadow of the detective's bust changed its shape upon the blind, as Martha Hudson, on her hands and knees, operated the facsimile in the lighted living room. Then the Colonel's bullet shattered the window-glass, passed accurately through the waxen skull, and flattened against the opposite wall. Mrs Hudson picked it from the carpet as coolly as she would have lifted a penny.

Holmes was obliged to her for her assistance, and told her so—a trifle abruptly, it would appear from Watson's record of the scene; but it was sufficient for Mrs Hudson. A laconic word of praise from Sherlock Holmes went a long way with those who served him. She was a bit distressed, however, by the ruin wrought by the Colonel's marksmanship. "I'm afraid it has spoiled your beautiful bust," she told the detective, a little later, handing him the bullet.

The place had been put in order during Holmes's absence; his supposed death had furnished an opportunity for straightening-up, that Mrs Hudson, for all her grief, had not failed to remark. "Our old chambers," wrote Watson, in *The Adventure of the Empty House*, "had been left unchanged, through the supervision of Mycroft Holmes and the immediate care of Mrs Hudson. As I entered I saw, it is true, an unwonted tidiness, but the old landmarks were all in their places. There were the chemical corner and the acid-stained deal-top table. There upon a shelf was the row of formidable scrap-books and books of reference which many of our fellow-citizens would have been so glad to burn. The diagrams, the violin-case, and the pipe-rack—even the Persian slipper which contained the tobacco—all met my eye as I glanced round me."

A happy homecoming, one must believe, for all of them.



### *The Baker Street Scene*

Thereafter, too, the relationship must have been somewhat closer. Holmes was never at any time demonstrative, even in his relations with Watson, and Mrs Hudson was clearly a woman who knew her place and was careful to occupy it. But it is impossible not to believe that a new warmth entered the situation after the detective's return from the dead. Holmes's proverbial distrust of the sex was surely qualified, after the adventure of *The Empty House*, by a distinguished exception made in favor of Mrs Hudson. Later events, indeed, were to prove that he did hold both her courage and intelligence in the highest respect; so much so that in an hour of his own and his country's need, it was of Martha Hudson that he thought and to Martha Hudson that he turned for assistance.

Meanwhile, the old connections had been restored. In Baker Street, again, all was as it had been and as it ever shall be. Watson, whose wife had died in the detective's absence, was back once more in his old room, and events were shaping toward the adventures of *The Second Stain* and *The Golden Pince-Nez*: episodes dated in the last quarter of that memorable year 1894.

The years that followed were to bring to Holmes, and vicariously to Mrs Hudson, some of the most surprising of his many experiences. Patrick Cairns, the murderer of "Black Peter" Carey, was to be captured in the rooms in Baker Street, after a struggle that, to Mrs Hudson, must have been reminiscent of that which preceded the taking of Jefferson Hope. The wild-eyed and unhappy John Hector McFarlane was to clatter up the stairs with every evidence of madness; the portly Mycroft was to drive through yellow fog to his brother's doorstep, with tidings of sensational import; and Dr Thorneycroft Huxtable, M.A., Ph.D., etc., was to crash prostrate and insensible upon the bearskin rug. Illustrious clients in number were to cross the threshold of the consulting room, and Holmes



## *The Singular Adventures of Martha Hudson*

was to refuse a knighthood for services that never have been revealed. Watson, good fellow, was to take another wife, though whose he took is still a matter much debated. Throughout all these scenes of triumph and disorder moved Martha Hudson on her daily round. Her figure, we may assume, grew thicker as the years went past, and possibly she climbed the stairs less often than had been her practice in earlier days. A hired cook, as we have seen, had for some years relieved her of the task of cooking. There was, one thinks, more leisure on her hands. It would be satisfying to know what use she made of it.

It has always been a minor mystery what relaxations she favored in her spare time, assuming that she had time to spare. There were her cronies, to be sure; but cinemas had not yet been invented. One fancies that she took to "patience," and later on—as we shall see—to knitting. When Holmes played upon his violin, we may be sure she sat and listened, rapt by the strains that also soothed and charmed the sentimental doctor. Madame Tussaud's was close at hand, and it is likely that its Chamber of Horrors displayed a murderer or two of Holmes's plucking. One sees her there on rainy afternoons, perhaps renewing old acquaintances.

What she thought of Watson's marriages is not included in the record. That she was fond of Mary Morstan can easily be imagined; and it may be that she wondered why the doctor, after his wife's death, did not at once return to Baker Street. She was not the sort, however, to venture comment on a delicate subject. Whomever Watson married, in 1902 or 1903, we may be certain that she offered her congratulations with good humor and sincerity. But Holmes's refusal of a knighthood must have tried her patience sorely.

In the matter of Sherlock Holmes's disguises, over the years of the relationship, it would be interesting to know what passed between them. There was a streak of mischief



in the detective; it is impossible not to believe that he tried them out upon her, with amusing results. She had sharp eyes, and it may be assumed that if he passed their scrutiny unrecognized, he was content that others too would be deluded. It is notorious that he fooled Watson and Athelney Jones without half trying, but in Mrs Hudson he must have recognized an intelligence of a different order. It is likely that sometimes she dismayed him. Like the landlady in Aristophanes, she may have asked, upon occasion: "Did you expect I would not know you again because you had buskins on?" Or words to that effect. With his more usual mummerly she was, of course, familiar, and the spectacle of an asthmatic seafaring gentleman creeping up the stairs, believing himself unknown, just conceivably may have caused her to stand below and giggle.

Once in the early days Holmes called her Turner—Mrs Turner. So Watson, at any rate, sets forth in *A Scandal in Bohemia*. "When Mrs Turner has brought in the tray I will make it clear to you," said the detective, as alleged by Watson; meaning that he would make clear what service he demanded of the doctor. The remark has been anything but clear to students of the record. That Holmes actually made it may be doubted; it is too obviously the sort of error Watson would commit in the throes of composition. No doubt, at the moment of writing, a patient named Turner was waiting in his consulting room—was in some fashion, anyway, upon his mind. The story was written by the doctor in 1891,<sup>2</sup> after the supposed death of Holmes in Switzerland, about an adventure dated in 1888; that is, it was written during the early weeks of his mourning for his friend, at a time when he was distraught. It is not for a moment to be supposed that Watson forgot the name of his old landlady, but it is a bit to his discredit, one thinks,

<sup>2</sup> It appeared in the *Strand Magazine* for July, 1891.



## *The Singular Adventures of Martha Hudson*

that not once during the three years of Holmes's absence did he call upon her.

So they lived in Baker Street, and so always shall they live; the detective and the doctor and, below stairs, the humble and loyal housekeeper whose happiness it was to serve them. The actual term of the detective's tenancy was from February, 1881,<sup>3</sup> until late in 1903—more probably until the early months of 1904. The date of Holmes's retirement from practice is not set forth by Watson; but in September, 1903, he was still actively engaged on the extraordinary adventure of *The Creeping Man*, and by December, 1904,<sup>4</sup> he had definitely retired to bee-keeping on the Sussex Downs. The hegira from London occurred some time in the months between, and the probabilities are perhaps in favor of a removal during the spring months of the latter year.

Thus ended the long Baker Street career of Mr Sherlock Holmes, consulting specialist in crime, and, with it, one thinks, Mrs Hudson's tenancy of the premises made famous by her remarkable lodger. Whether she owned the building or merely herself rented it from another is not clear; but—although it is nowhere explicitly asserted—there can be no reasonable doubt that she retired with Holmes to Sussex; if not at once, then later. Writing, in his retirement, of the curious mystery of *The Lion's Mane*, it is Holmes himself who furnishes the clue. "My house is lonely," he tells us. "I, my old housekeeper, and my bees have the estate all to ourselves." This was in 1926, in which year the detective published the reminiscence.<sup>5</sup> He was writing, however, of an adventure that occurred in 1907, and even

<sup>3</sup> The *Study in Scarlet* was called to his attention on March 4th; during the "first week or so" there had been no callers.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Adventure of the Second Stain*, which was published in the *Strand Magazine* for December, 1904.

<sup>5</sup> In the *Strand Magazine* for December, 1926.



### *The Baker Street Scene*

then Mrs Hudson was with him. It was she who first heard of the curious incident of Fitzroy McPherson's dog, and mentioned it to Holmes—although he did not encourage gossip of the countryside.

Thereafter the record of her service is a blank until the second day of August, 1914—"the most terrible August in the history of the world." On that evening two famous Germans stood upon the terrace of a house near Harwich. "Only one window showed a light behind them; in it there stood a lamp, and beside it, seated at a table, was a dear old ruddy-faced woman in a country cap. She was bending over her knitting and stopping occasionally to stroke a large black cat upon a stool beside her." With her self-absorption and "general air of comfortable somnolence," thought one of the Germans, she might have personified Britannia herself.

"Who is that?" asked Von Herling, the secretary of legation; and Von Bork replied: "That is Martha, the only servant I have left."

She looked with apprehension at the figure on the sofa, a little later, when Von Bork lay trussed and helpless, and seemed distressed that it was she who had brought him to that pass. "According to his lights," she said, he had been a kindly master. For two years she had served him faithfully, by Holmes's order, and at length she had betrayed him—the master spy of Germany. The dousing of her lamp had been the signal for the detective's entrance. It was Martha Hudson's last adventure, as far as it is possible for research to discover. In all things she had played her part to admiration, Holmes told the doctor when he came upon the scene: "I got her the situation when first I took the matter up." Once more in the history of the world, a woman's wit had saved a mighty nation from disaster.

She was to report to Holmes upon the morrow, at Claridge's Hotel, and there can be no question that they re-



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turned, in time, to their cottage on the Sussex Downs. It is a pleasant place in which, with Sherlock Holmes, she now passes her declining years, and they are ninety, each of them, if they are a day. Mrs Hudson, in all likelihood, is even older. Certainly she was no younger than Holmes when he became her lodger. Her "stately tread," in 1881, would suggest at least a woman in her prime. Is it possible that she is verging on her first century?

But it is proverbial that landladies never die.

"My villa," wrote Holmes, in 1926, "is situated upon the southern slope of the Downs, commanding a great view of the Channel. At this point the coast-line is entirely of chalk cliffs, which can only be descended by a single, long, tortuous path, which is steep and slippery. At the bottom of the path lie a hundred yards of pebbles and shingle, even when the tide is at full. Here and there, however, there are curves and hollows which make splendid swimming-pools filled afresh with each flow." It is a description richly filled with pictorial suggestion, and the possibilities turn one a little giddy. The wonder is that they do not break their necks.

In the evenings, if he still lives, Harold Stackhurst sometimes drops in for a chat and, probably, a cup of Mrs Hudson's tea. We may imagine that the conversation runs a bit to bees and rheumatism, then swings to days and nights in Baker Street. Lucky Harold Stackhurst! Only occasionally does Watson visit them, which is perhaps unfortunate for the record. But Holmes, presumably, still adds a chapter, now and then, to that textbook which was to be the fruit of his declining years—which was to "focus the whole art of detection" into a single volume. The long winter evenings, when the bees and Mrs Hudson have been sent to bed, should be an admirable time for literary composition.



## *Annie Oakley in Baker Street*

A NOTE ON THE LAMENTABLE LIMITATIONS OF MR SHERLOCK  
HOLMES'S PISTOL MARKSMANSHIP

BY ROBERT KEITH LEAVITT

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*Those who have been brought up in the tradition that the London police force eschews the use of firearms, and who feel, in consequence, that no defender of British justice should carry anything more lethal than a billy, will probably be disconcerted at the evidence of frequent pistol-packing throughout the saga.*

*Major Robert Keith Leavitt has made an exhaustive study of the subject, and his revelations should convince all who might be led to criticize the master for taking unfair ballistic advantage of a helpless opponent that Holmes was not, in fact, giving himself anything of an edge at all.*

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"I HAVE ALWAYS HELD," says Dr Watson,<sup>1</sup> "that pistol practice should be distinctly an open-air pastime; and when Holmes, in one of his queer humours, would sit in an armchair with his hair-trigger and a hundred Boxer cartridges and proceed to adorn the opposite wall with a patriotic V.R. done in bullet-pocks, I felt strongly that neither the atmosphere nor the appearance of our room was improved by it."

The lay reader, swallowing this description whole, may

<sup>1</sup> *The Musgrave Ritual.*



get—as Watson intended—the impression that Mr Sherlock Holmes was a kind of Annie-Oakley-in-pants taking a spot of practice just to keep in trim. Actually, the whole incident, when closely examined, hints at the reverse, and all other evidence in the Watsonian Writings goes to show that Mr Sherlock Holmes's skill with the handgun was of a regrettably low order.

Let us consider the atrocious conduct of the lounging marksman—for atrocious is the word: in all respects it was worthless as pistol practice. Holmes sat in an armchair—a position from which one may rarely or never expect to shoot with deadly intent. He undertook a job of Spenserian nicety which almost certainly necessitated doubling up his knees, resting his pistol hand on the right knee and supporting that hand by grasping its wrist with the left hand, the left forearm resting on the left knee. This position would be necessary for precision in explosive calligraphy but useful for little else. Of little or no other use, either, would be the weapon Holmes chose for this occasion. The "hair-trigger" pistol is an inherently dangerous weapon, prohibited in match shooting, impractical for sport and impractical in the extreme for detective operations. Almost certainly this one was a single-shot "salon" pistol of Continental make. Pollard, the English authority,<sup>2</sup> calls these "wonderfully complicated . . . [but] so delicate . . . as to [be] practically worthless for ordinary use. . . . For trick work, like shooting the pips off the ace of clubs, they are invaluable." No shooting with this weapon could conceivably improve practical proficiency in the use of the standard handgun.

And Holmes's choice of ammunition was even less practical. To the lay American, the name "Boxer" cartridge may connote something of a vaguely pipsqueak, firecracker

<sup>2</sup> Capt Hugh B. C. Pollard, *The Book of the Pistol*, New York, Robt. McBride & Co. 1917.



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nature, like our cal. .22 BB caps. Actually the name Boxer was used in England as a generic term for *any center-fire* cartridge—a form of ammunition perfected by the invention of Colonel Boxer, R.A., in 1867.<sup>3</sup>

Now, center-fire cartridges cannot be made in small calibres or very low power. And in the nineteenth century the smallest center-fire—or Boxer—cartridge was cal. .310, slightly smaller than the modern .32, which packs 100 foot-pounds of muzzle energy. So—to say that what Holmes produced with *this* ammunition was a pattern in bullet “pocks” is a rank euphemism, as any earnest student can discover by firing a .32 bullet at even the stoutest plaster-covered brick wall. One impact will shatter the plaster for a radius of some inches in all directions, and two hitting close together will blast away the surface of the brick beneath in great flakes for a depth of anywhere from a half inch to two inches. Assuming the ceiling of the Holmes-Watson living room to have been 10 feet high,<sup>4</sup> Holmes would have allowed 3 feet above the floor so that chairs and tables would not obstruct a view of his masterpiece, and would have allowed an esthetic margin of 1 foot top and bottom. With a controlling depth of 5 feet, the width of the design would not have been over 6 feet. Faced with the problem, therefore, of getting 100 shots into a pattern not larger than the 6 feet by 5 feet prescribed by these considerations, Holmes would probably have chosen the script V.R. (with crown) as his design, since it allowed him to space his shots more widely. But even so, plotting this pattern to scale will show that the shots, if correctly placed, could hardly have been more widely spread than

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th Ed., “Rifle.” Cf. also J. N. George, *English Pistols and Revolvers*, Small Arms Technical Publishing Co., Marines, N. C., 1938.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Illustration facing p. 68 in *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*, and count courses of brick.





4" c. to c. Long before Holmes had finished, the room—and the entire house—would have been filled with gritty, white plaster-dust, and the end-result after all hundred cartridges had been expended, would have been a vast area chipped away in a shallow concave and glowering out redly over a room littered ankle-deep in chunks of plaster and great ugly shards of what had once been good English brick. Watson was a master of understatement, but it is doubtful if he ever undercut his remark that neither the atmosphere nor the appearance of the room was "improved."

He attributes this prank of Holmes to "one of his queer humours" and that, indeed, was what it was. Holmes was



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no pistol expert. He was aware of the fact—as I shall shortly show. And the whole V. R. performance was a gesture—an outrageously contemptuous one—of scorn for the handgun.

Holmes disdained the pistol not only in his puckish moments but even in his most urgently practical ones. He was all too conscious of the limitations of the pistol and of his own even greater limitations in its use.

Whenever he had occasion to pull a gun on a really desperate character, he got as near as possible to his man before showing his weapon. His standard practice of clapping a pistol right against his captive's head<sup>5</sup> is ample evidence of awareness of personal fallibility with the handgun.

On occasion, to be sure, he cowed opponents by an ostentatious fingering of loaded firearms in the pocket of his dressing gown<sup>6</sup> or by laying his revolver, loaded and cocked, on the table before him. But here he was relying on a celebrated genius for acting rather than on faith in his ability to hit anything from this impractical stance. Pollard<sup>7</sup> says, "The 'shooting through the pocket' myth is dangerous, for even the expert shot cannot depend on getting his man this way . . ." With Ex-Professor Moriarty and Count Sylvius, however, the acting sufficed, for they were not themselves craftsmen in the manual technique of homicide.

But on other occasions Holmes preferred less tenuous protection. Watson modestly says that Holmes's favorite weapon was a loaded hunting crop.<sup>8</sup> Actually the Chronicler knew Holmes considered that a far better form of insurance was Watson himself with an army pistol in his

<sup>5</sup> *The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet, The Adventure of the Dancing Men, The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Final Problem, The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone.*

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit. p. 113.

<sup>8</sup> *The Adventure of the Six Napoleons.*



pocket. On at least nine occasions<sup>9</sup> Holmes asked Watson to take his revolver on a dangerous mission, or in the face of danger to draw it.

This fact in itself proves conclusively that Watson was much the better pistol shot of the two. There was every reason why he should have been. He had put in a considerable stretch as an army surgeon—a post in which, as Miss Helen Simpson has pointed out,<sup>10</sup> his duties were light. In his leisure the methodical Watson obviously spent a great deal of time in pistol practice.

His weapon—at least the early one which he calls “my old service revolver”<sup>11</sup>—was the Adams 6-shot cal. .450 breech-loader, with a good, honest 6” barrel, standard in the British army in the second Afghan War.<sup>12</sup> Its somewhat scanted front sight (a decided advantage for carrying in the pocket but difficult to use in a dim light) was more than offset by the length of barrel with ample sighting radius. It was precisely the weapon for such a shot as that at Tonga in *The Sign of the Four*. Later, Watson acquired a short-barrelled hip-picket pistol which Holmes erroneously described as an “Eley’s No. 2,”<sup>13</sup> but which was actually a Webley’s No. 2. Holmes’s inaccuracy in this reference, and his later outrageous abuse of this piece in the test described in *The Problem of Thor Bridge*, both confirm his lack of interest in handguns.

Holmes’s own revolver was unsuited in his hands to any

<sup>9</sup> *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of the Four*, *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*, *The Adventure of Black Peter*, *The Adventure of the Six Napoleons*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Cf. also *The Problem of Thor Bridge*, where Holmes, reminded by Watson of a revolver’s usefulness, replies revealingly: “I am a little absent-minded in such matters.”

<sup>10</sup> “Medical Career and Capacities of Dr J. H. Watson,” in *Baker Street Studies*.

<sup>11</sup> *A Study in Scarlet*.

<sup>12</sup> J. N. George, op. cit. pl. XXVII, Fig. 2 and related text.

<sup>13</sup> *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*.



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other than muzzle-to-gizzard shooting. It was the Webley Metropolitan Police Model—the same which Inspector Lestrade gaily said he carried whenever he had his pants on.<sup>14</sup>

This arm<sup>15</sup> had the short 2½" barrel required for hip-pocket (or dressing-gown-pocket) wear, but on account of its short sight-radius, it was difficult for anybody but a past master to shoot with accuracy.

It may be objected that two passages show Holmes *did* have confidence in this piece. In *The Sign of the Four* he loaded it with two and only two cartridges. This, however, indicated confidence rather in Tonga's than in his own accuracy. He knew he would have time for only two shots at best. In *The Three Garridebs* he referred to his revolver as "my old favourite," but it must be obvious to the close student that he did so with a wry sneer.

It is not surprising, then, that in every case where matters came right down to gunplay, it was Watson who showed real marksmanship. There are only four such cases in the Record:

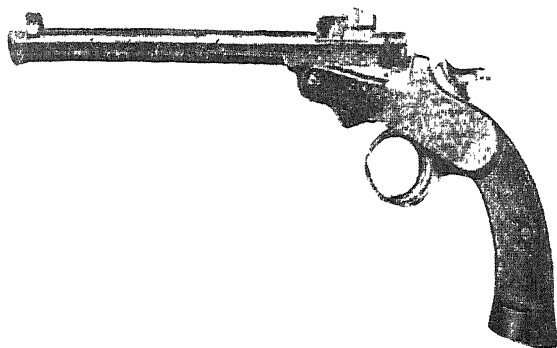
In *The Sign of the Four* Holmes and Watson stood together at the bow of the police launch, with pistols ready and cocked. The range was easy—"within a boat's length." The target—the child-sized Tonga, who was probably visible only from the waist up—was brightly illuminated by the launch's searchlight, and that target, while small, was stationary, relative to the shooters. Although the launch was vibrating with fierce energy, the water was smooth. The shooters had three or four seconds in which to aim. "Our pistols," says Watson, "rang out together" and the little savage fell into the water.

One of them, at least, had hit Tonga. It was almost certainly Watson.

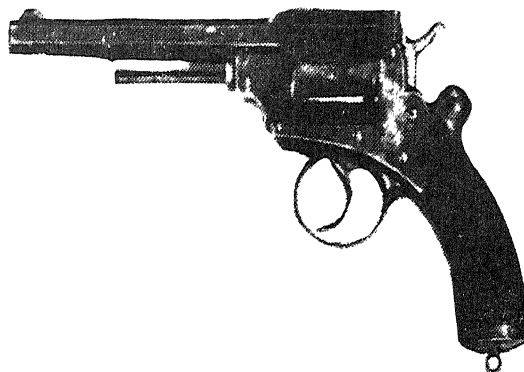
<sup>14</sup> *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

<sup>15</sup> *Webley & Scott's* Catalog of 1885 has an excellent picture of it on p. 5.

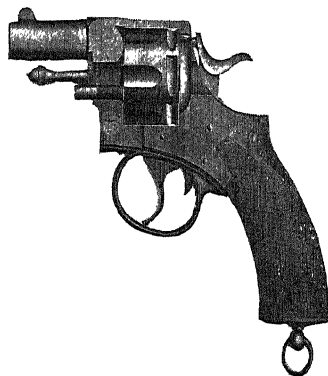




"Practically worthless for ordinary use." Continental target pistol of the hair-trigger variety, with which Holmes devastated the wall of 221B Baker Street in alleged target practice. (*Musgrave Ritual*) (Illus. from Pollard, Capt. Hugh B. C., *The Book of the Pistol*, N. Y. C., McBride, 1917.)

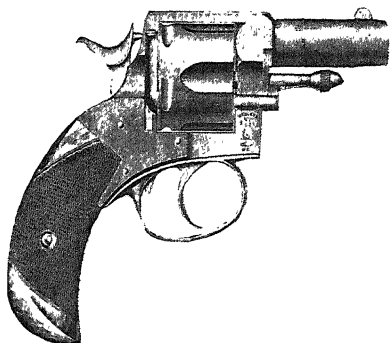


"More than once . . . a good friend in need." (*Thor Bridge*) Watson's old service revolver, the Adams .450, standard in the British Army during the Doctor's service. Though a good shot with this piece, Watson later replaced it with a more compact gun for pocket wear. (Illus. from *English Pistols and Revolvers* by J. N. George. Small Arms Technical Pub. Co., 1938)

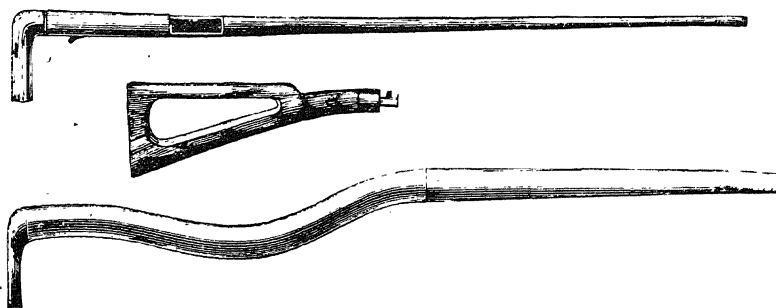


Sherlock Holmes's gun as shown in a Webley's catalog for 1885. In Holmes's hands one end was about as dangerous as the other (note the wicked little lanyard-ring). When fingered in the pocket of his dressing gown, this weapon deterred but did not greatly disquiet the formidable Moriarty.

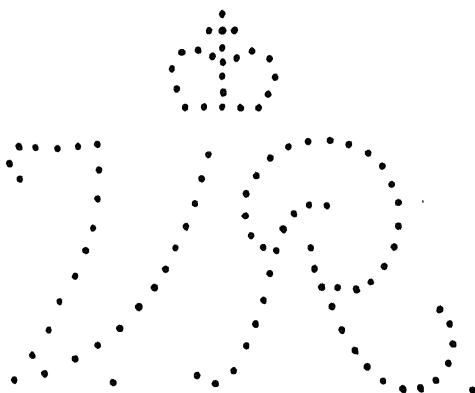




"An excellent argument with a gentleman who can twist steel pokers into knots." Gun from Webley's 1885 catalog showing Watson's second revolver, which Holmes mistakenly called an "Eley's No. 2" (*Speckled Band*). Later it served as guinea-pig for Holmes's experiment in the *Thor Bridge* mystery. Watson probably used the cal. .380.



Effete descendants of the famous air gun of Col. Sebastian Moran (*The Empty House*). Two walking-stick guns from a catalog of W. W. Greener, Birmingham and London, about 1900. Above, for .410 shotgun shells. Below, an air rifle to be used with a pump (not shown). The Moran gun combined the best features of each with other refinements for great power and accuracy.



Scale: 1 Foot



In *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* Watson blew out the brains of the mastiff which was worrying Jephro Rucastle's throat. This was not a shot to tax anybody's marksmanship, but certainly it showed much more respect for his weapon than Holmes's similar act in dispatching the Hound of the Baskervilles.

Here was a case where even Watson's marksmanship had been severely tried. The light was bad; it would have made a good, sighted shot almost impossible for the ordinary man, even at a stationary target, for the sights would have been nearly invisible against a dim background. Of course, Watson's eyesight was phenomenally acute, for we are told that he had, only a few days previously, been able to discern a boy's figure at "several miles" with the naked eye.<sup>18</sup> But in this case, the quarry appeared suddenly, at high speed, out of a fog-bank less than 50 yards away. Its appearance was such as to shake the nerves even of Holmes and Watson, and to scare the normally courageous Lestrade into a convulsion fit. The hound covered the intervening ground in perhaps four or five seconds, during which Holmes and Watson admirably recovered their nerves. Now the target was rapidly receding on a diagonal course and at a gallop—a difficult shot for even the best of pistol marksmen. Again, as in the launch, Holmes and Watson fired together. And the hound "gave a hideous howl." Watson modestly says, "at least one of us had hit him." He knew perfectly well *which* one it had been—first because he knew no shooter of Holmes's capacity could have got a hit under the conditions, except by accident, and second because the competent pistol shot usually knows when he has nipped the ten-ring.

Holmes, running up, dispatched the Hound with five shots poured into its flank—a far from surely lethal por-

<sup>18</sup> *The Hound of the Baskervilles.*



tion of the beast and one from which any deflected bullet, or any passing clear through the body, might have hit Sir Henry Baskerville with grievous or even fatal results. Watson's choice of the head would have been much better.

In the last case to be considered—that of *The Three Garridebs*—we have a striking and dramatic proof of the low level of Holmes's marksmanship—both in his own estimate and in that of a competent opponent.

On this occasion Killer Evans, the "Wild West" gunman, was surprised by Holmes and Watson in an extremely untenable position: cornered in a pit with two pistols pointing at his head. He surveyed the situation coolly. Unerringly he must have seen that Watson was armed with an unfamiliar and short-barreled weapon (it was one of Holmes's, pressed upon the mistrustful Watson for the occasion) and that Holmes held his own gun in a manner indicating complete incompetence as a marksman, even at short range. Probably Holmes was in the habit of curling his thumb *down* along the grip—a dead giveaway to any opponent skilled in pistol work. Evans therefore faked surrender and scrambled to the surface, talking as he came. "In an instant," says Watson, "he had whisked out a revolver from his breast and fired two shots." The first of these was almost certainly directed at Watson, as the obviously more dangerous opponent. It hit Watson on the thigh; fortunately it was "a mere scratch," but it was enough to throw Watson off on the return shot which he does not mention, but which he undoubtedly fired.

Holmes's return shot was as curious an incident as that of the dog in the night-time. There *was* no shot from Holmes. That was the curious incident. Instead, the great detective, confronted with a life-and-death emergency at the muzzle of an armed opponent going full blast, *hit that opponent over the head*, presumably with the lanyard-ring of his weapon. Effective though such a crack could be—



and was—nothing could more completely reveal Holmes's distrust of his own marksmanship with the pistol.

There was a reason for this. Holmes's favorite weapon was neither the handgun nor the hunting-crop. He was a rifleman.

Two sets of facts point unmistakably to this conclusion:

First, while Holmes never expressed the slightest awe of revolvers, he had a wholesome respect for full-length weapons. Even an air-rifle gave him a healthy scare.<sup>17</sup>

Second, Holmes had had military experience with the rifle. Holmes's military service, to be sure, is not specifically mentioned in the Canon. But his close working familiarity with the military establishment, with the customs, habits, mannerisms, carriage and dress of soldiers—a knowledge so detailed and so precise that he could identify, even in civilian clothes, a Sergeant of the Royal Marine Light Infantry, a non-com of the Royal Artillery or an ex-officer of the Middlesex Yeomanry<sup>18</sup>—could have been gained nowhere but in the military establishment. Watson's very reticence in not mentioning Holmes's service shows that it must have been in the ranks. For Watson—once a commissioned officer—to have mentioned it would have seemed to that tactful biographer like condescension; therefore he passed it over. Now, Holmes could not have served a hitch

<sup>17</sup> *The Final Problem*: "You are afraid of something?" I asked. "Well, I am." "Of what?" "Of air guns . . . I am by no means a nervous man. At the same time, it is stupidity rather than courage, to refuse to recognize danger . . ." Colonel Moran's actual weapon must still be among the secret memorabilia of the Metropolitan Police Force, but it is of so fiendishly clever a design that its details have never been allowed to become known. Of its general form we can judge only by the vestigial copies made—perhaps by Von Herder himself or by his disciple, Straubenzee—and sold by Messrs Greener & Co. of Birmingham and London, in the later years of the same century.

<sup>18</sup> *A Study in Scarlet, The Greek Interpreter, The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier*. Elsewhere Holmes showed equal familiarity with the service.



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in the regular army. The time factor rules that out. Obviously, then, there remains the Yeomanry: the Territorial force. Holmes as a Territorial in some county battalion during his home- or college-days would almost certainly have had much training as a rifleman, for the British army during the 70's was paying a great deal of attention to musketry training.

Can we get confirmation of this? The rolls of the Territorial force in the 70's might be searched if one were in England in peace-time and had leisure for the job. Failing that, there is another shot we can try.

British rifle competition in the 70's and 80's of the last century was conducted under the auspices of the National Rifle Association of that Kingdom. Prizes of considerable value were donated by persons of distinction for matches which then were given the names of the donors—as "H.M. The Queen's Prize." These prizes were further augmented by the entry-fees of the contestants. And the records of each year's matches, including a list of the money-winners, are available to anyone who cares to consult them, in the *Proceedings* of the (British) National Rifle Association in the files of the New York Public Library.

Consulting the *Proceedings* for 1879, page 116, we find in the records of one of the biggest matches, "The Alexandra," entry fee 1 guinea, shot at 500 and 600 yards—in the preceding year, 1878—that 9th place with a prize of £10 was won by *Corporal Holmes of the 19th North Yorkshires!* In the same year the same Holmes had taken 48th place in "The St George's," for a prize of £6.

The initials are not given, but there can be no doubt that this was *our* Holmes. His family has been shown by Father Knox, in *Baker Street Studies*, to have come from the north of England. The Yorkshire Territorials would have been the natural outfit for him to join. Regulations were lax enough to permit him to retain membership



throughout his University and early London days, and to participate in shoots as a member of the 19th Battalion. The exaggerated air of authority with which he later customarily addressed soldiers marks him as an ex-non-com. In his early London days, when he was frankly hard up,<sup>19</sup> he would certainly have welcomed the opportunity to take £16 worth of prize-money, even if there had been no other object of his competing in the matches.

But there was such an object! As the student will discover by reading the *Proceedings* of the National Rifle Association for 1877, 1880 and 1881, there was a scandal in that organization in the years 1877 and 1878 concerning alleged cheating by collusion between shooters and scorers during the course of rifle matches, and it became so notorious that the Association went to the trouble and expense of retaining counsel and agents to collect "voluminous evidence against persons suspected of fraud at the matches." Obviously young Holmes was the agent retained to gather this evidence. Naturally he would have gathered his evidence in the guise of a competitor. Probably he was rung in by one Lt Backhouse of the 6th Lincs., a Life Member, winner of "The Albert" in 1877 and plainly identical with that later Lord Backwater who in after years threw some nice business to Holmes in the cases of *Silver Blaze* and *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*.

This scandal, known as "The Mullineaux Case," occupied Holmes over three months (according to the *Proceedings*) but was handled by him with such competence and discretion that (as in so many of his cases) legal proceedings were avoided and the details never became public, though as late as 1880 members of the Association who were not in the know were clamoring for information—and being shut up for their pains.

<sup>19</sup> *The Musgrave Ritual*. Cf. also "The Fiscal Holmes," in *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*.



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All evidence, then, goes to show that Mr Sherlock Holmes was the most indifferent of marksmen with the handgun, that he showed his contempt for it by the atrocious performance of the V. R. on a brick wall, that he did not trust himself with the arm of the detective force, that Watson, not Holmes, was the reliable shot when it came to gunplay, and finally that Holmes was a rifleman. The last fact is conclusive: As every shooter knows, scarcely one rifleman in a dozen has the slightest use for handguns—and Mr Sherlock Holmes was not in this heterodox minority.



## *The Significance of the Second Stain*

BY FELIX MORLEY

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*It is accepted as a fact that there are hidden prophesies in the Sacred Writings. How deep and esoteric some of these are is suggested by Dr Felix Morley's analysis of the revelations implicit in the apparently forthright narrative given to us under the title of The Adventure of the Second Stain. Written in January, 1940, this remarkable contribution to the higher criticism also makes reference in passing to Holmes's astounding proposal, in The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor, of a flag for the United Nations. Apropos of the quarterings deliberately left vacant on this flag, Dr Morley admits that he would hold today that it was Russia and China, rather than France and the Netherlands, which Holmes had in mind when he delivered himself of this piece of clairvoyance.*

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IN THE TRULY searching research which has been devoted to the life of Sherlock Holmes, surprisingly little attention has been paid to his work in the field of international relations. Yet that interest, on the part of a mind so perceptive, so keen and so constructive, is obviously of the greatest potential importance today. It is my reasoned conviction that contemporary statesmanship has much to learn from Holmes, which has led me to collect these few marginalia for the critical attention of the earnest student.

I shall, in the course of my remarks, be forced to take



exception to certain findings of famous scholars in the field of Sherlockholmitos. There are points of fundamental importance on which I shall have to take issue both with H. W. Bell and T. S. Blakeney. Therefore I have the more pleasure in registering, at the outset, my profound agreement with Vincent Starrett's verdict that Sherlock Holmes belongs in "that higher realism which is the only true romance." Indeed, I believe I have some remarkable confirmatory evidence for Mr Starrett's dogma, that "the imperishable detective is still a more commanding figure in the world than most of the warriors and statesmen in whose present existence we are invited to believe."

No worker in the vineyard has ever made the mistake of regarding Sherlock Holmes as being merely the greatest of all known detectives. But his instinctive rebellion against this occupation has been inadequately recognized. The methods of modern psychology have never been applied to so suggestive a reaction as his periodic indulgence in narcotics. Dr Watson, that most worthy but undeniably limited G. P., considered this habit solely from the physiological viewpoint. Yet poor Holmes frequently tried to tell his only confidant that the incentive behind these lapses was a consciousness of wasted, or at least misapplied, talent.

"It is one of the curses of a mind with a turn like mine," he once cried in a literal anguish, "that I must look at everything with reference to my own special subject."<sup>1</sup> On another occasion he confided to Watson that his "proper atmosphere" was that of "the most abstract cryptogram on the most intricate analysis."<sup>2</sup> Can it be truthfully asserted that most of the cases chronicled by his biographer fall in that category? Can it be denied, in view of present circumstances, that the international problems so terribly

<sup>1</sup> *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Sign of the Four.*



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bungled in the late Victorian era were fully worthy to be classified, by given definition, as the "proper atmosphere" of Sherlock Holmes?

A member of the Baker Street Irregulars whose brilliance is not to be discounted because it is intuitive rather than analytical—I refer, of course, to Mr Christopher Morley—has made the interesting suggestion that Sherlock Holmes was really an American.

As Mr Starrett has politely indicated, that, if taken literally, is the bunk. But as a hint of the super-national characteristics of the sage of Baker Street Mr Morley's wild assertion cannot be wholly disregarded. It is a clue to the underlying interests of a great political philosopher who could not be satisfied with the doctrinaire nationalism of the late nineteenth century. And we know that as early as 1887 Holmes was looking forward to the day when there would be a "world-wide country under a flag which shall be a quartering of the Union Jack with the Stars and Stripes."<sup>3</sup> One may reasonably surmise that the two unfilled quarters of this banner were in Holmes's mind dedicated to other important democracies, probably France and the Netherlands, as the working basis of that federation of "Union Now," so persuasively urged today by my good friend Clarence Streit.



<sup>3</sup> *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor.*



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Holmes's almost passionate search for a more stable basis of international relations is of course less apparent because of Dr Watson's unconscious effort to obscure what we may reasonably surmise to have been the major interest in his friend's life. As a result of his early adventures in Australia, and his experiences as an army surgeon on the Northwest Frontier, one would have expected the cosmopolitan Watson to take a particular interest in Holmes's desire to see a more orderly international society.

Holmes evidently hoped that this would be the case. His first comment, when young Stamford brought the two together, was: "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive."<sup>4</sup> What a wealth of anticipation for a fruitful collaboration in the most vital field of human endeavor is hidden behind this swift deduction! And how sad the contrast between this eager hopefulness and the disillusionment so apparent fourteen years later, when Holmes was forced to admit that his mind was "tearing itself to pieces because it is not connected up with the work for which it was built."<sup>5</sup>

It was Father Knox, I believe, who first emphasized the truism that studies of Sherlock Holmes are, first and foremost, studies of Dr Watson.<sup>6</sup> Holmesian research, however, has not adequately assessed the significance of this fact. There are instances in which the Baker Street Boswell effectively, if not deliberately, obscures the deeper personality of his Johnson. The outstanding case is that of Sherlock's interest in the field of international relations.

One can understand Watson's isolationist attitude, even as one can appreciate why Senator Borah thought as he did. In the good doctor's case, to begin with, there were his two serious wounds, either of which would explain a deep personal mistrust of any form of high diplomacy.

<sup>4</sup> *A Study in Scarlet*.

<sup>5</sup> *The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge*.

<sup>6</sup> *Essays in Satire*, p. 147.



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The effect of these wounds was evidently to stir a subconscious resentment whenever Holmes seemed inclined to endorse the principles of collective action. And we know that Holmes realized this idiosyncrasy in his friend and as a result deliberately concealed many of the very important international undertakings to which his practice led.

Thus Watson only knew from newspaper references that in the winter of 1890-91 Holmes was "engaged by the French Government upon a matter of supreme importance."<sup>7</sup> The doctor was never told of the very delicate matter in which Holmes, three years earlier, had served the reigning family of Holland.<sup>8</sup> And more than five years passed after Watson's introduction to Mycroft Holmes before Sherlock thought it wise to give the doctor any indication of the enormous importance of his brother's governmental post. Much can be read into Sherlock's tactful remark to Watson at this time—"One has to be discreet when one talks of high matters of state."<sup>10</sup>

There is ample evidence not merely to show that Holmes felt obliged to hide his deepest intellectual interest from Watson, but also that the latter's isolationist attitude justified Sherlock's mistrust. Without laboring the point, I note that the doctor, although possessed of a strong gambling instinct, refused point-blank to take an inside tip for investment in South African gold fields.<sup>11</sup> Had Watson taken advantage of Mr Thurston's advice in 1898 the speculation would by this time have richly retrieved the shattered fortunes of the family. But it was a foreign commitment with political implications, and the doctor would have none of it.

Much additional material could be sifted to demonstrate

<sup>7</sup> *The Final Problem.*

<sup>8</sup> *A Case of Identity.*

<sup>9</sup> *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans.*

<sup>11</sup> *The Adventure of the Dancing Men.*



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Dr Watson's reluctance to discuss Holmes's contribution as a brilliant amateur in the field of international statecraft. But I raise the point primarily because of its bearing on the truly remarkable revelations imperfectly concealed within the doctor's account of *The Adventure of the Second Stain*. And I am prepared to show that failure to give due weight to Watson's most arresting complex will explain the confusion which has heretofore surrounded this very important story.

That Adventure is one of several of the narrated cases which are concerned, in greater or less degree, with vital international problems. For all his latent antagonism to this field of inquiry Dr Watson, as an honest though prejudiced biographer, could not completely subordinate what was evidently the most absorbing and stimulating of Holmes's many interests. In deciding which cases should be handed down to posterity, Watson was frequently fatuous. We realize this not merely from Sherlock's occasional irritated protests,<sup>12</sup> but also from the inclusion of such essentially trivial cases as that of Miss Mary Sutherland, or that of the mulatto child of Mrs Effie Hebron Munro. Nevertheless, if only darkly through the murky glass of Dr Watson's selection, we have abundant evidence of Holmes's broad knowledge and brilliant insight into the highest reaches of political science.

We are all thoroughly familiar, of course, with the personalities and setting of the adventure which Dr Watson correctly defines as "the most important international case" which Sherlock Holmes was ever "called upon to handle." But in view of the remarkable aspects of the episode which have heretofore eluded public attention, it may not be

<sup>12</sup> In *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* Holmes charged Watson with having "degraded what should have been a course of lectures into a series of tales."



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superfluous to refresh your memories with a very brief summary of the investigation.

It was, Dr Watson tells us, "in a year, and even in a decade that shall be nameless" that the Premier and Secretary for European Affairs visited "out humble home in Baker Street." These eminent statesmen sought the aid of Holmes in recovering "a letter from a foreign potentate," addressed to the British Government on his own responsibility and couched in phrases so provocative that its publication would unquestionably have brought on war. The European Secretary, fully appreciating the menace of its explosive contents, had kept this letter in a locked dispatch box in his bedroom for six nights, not even telling his wife of its nature. None the less it disappeared.

Holmes, of course, quickly realized that the evidence pointed to either Oberstein or La Rothière or Eduardo Lucas, then the leading foreign spies in London and the only ones "capable of playing so bold a game" as to publish the letter and thereby force Great Britain into war to further the national interests of one or other of their governments. The seeming coincidence of the murder of Lucas the night before itself singled him out as the guilty agent. But for three days, in spite of the full cooperation of Scotland Yard, no progress was made. The only important thing that happened, in Holmes's own words, "is that nothing happened."<sup>13</sup>

At the end of this period it was Inspector Lestrade who called to Holmes's attention the evidence of the second stain—the fact that the white woodwork of the floor was spotless under the ugly stain on the rug where the life

<sup>13</sup> As an illustration of the vital importance of negative evidence this is almost comparable with the classic and curious instance in *Silver Blaze*, of the dog that "did nothing in the night-time." In *The Adventure of the Second Stain*, however, Holmes failed to make an equally brilliant—and obvious—deduction.



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blood of the unfortunate Lucas had ebbed away, though there was "a great crimson spill" on the floor under another part of the floor covering. To Lestrade this turning of the rug was "a mere trifle," "queer" or even "what you might call freakish." But to Holmes it was the missing clue which first revealed the repository where Lucas had secreted the purloined letter and then, by a sequence of lucid reasoning, led to the identification of the lovely Lady Hilda Trelawney Hope as the wholly unsuspected culprit. With customary gallantry, however, Holmes endeavored to shield the disconsolate Lady Hilda from the consequences of her incredible indiscretion and replaced the letter in the dispatch box where the Premier and the European Secretary shortly afterwards found it.

Such, in bare outline, was the mystery of which the solution seemed to Trelawney Hope "inconceivable—impossible." It further caused him to define Holmes as "a wizard, a sorcerer." The words may at first glance seem slightly exaggerated. But there is reason to believe that they were selected with all the nicety of description which one would expect from a top-flight British diplomat.

In the more detailed analysis of the episode, to which I now turn, it is obviously of first importance to establish the date as closely as possible. In this, as in many other essential matters, Dr Watson has consciously endeavored to deceive us. It is "a carefully guarded account of the incident" which he has placed at our disposal. We only know that it was on a Tuesday morning in autumn that the Prime Minister and Secretary for European Affairs descended upon Baker Street. Later we are told, incidentally, that the street lamps were still being lighted by hand at the time of this adventure. But this is suggestive rather than definitive.

Mr H. W. Bell and Mr T. S. Blakeney agree in placing the date of this adventure in the autumn of 1894. The



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authority of either of these experts is great. In conjunction their findings would seem conclusive. But, with all deference, I must disagree, and I must add a particular caveat against Mr Blakeney's wholly unwarranted identification of Lord Bellinger as Lord Roseberry, and of Trelawney Hope as Lord Kimberley.<sup>14</sup>

The obvious clue to the chronology of the Second Stain is the reference to the trio of secret agents—Oberstein, La Rothière and Eduardo Lucas—of whom the first two reappear, with Oberstein as a principal character, in *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*. The date of the latter case is placed meticulously as the third week of November, 1895, and both Mr Bell and Mr Blakeney have followed the trail thereby afforded. In November, 1895, the Big Three among the secret agents in London were Louis La Rothière, Hugo Oberstein and Adolph Meyer, the last of these having obviously filled the shoes of Eduardo Lucas, whose lifeblood wrote the title of the second stain. This adventure, therefore, took place prior to November, 1895. We know it could not have been later because before the end of that month Oberstein was caught, with the missing Bruce-Partington submarine plans in his possession, and "was safely engulfed for fifteen years in a British prison." With that criminal record it is impossible to suppose that he, or any other using that name, would have resumed the occupation of foreign spy, after 1910.

Beyond question, therefore, the date of the Second Stain adventure is prior to November, 1895. But I find it wholly impossible to accept the almost Watsonian deductions which lead Mr Bell and Mr Blakeney to place it only a year earlier.

Both these authorities treat far too lightly the fact that, in the Second Stain, Holmes had at his finger tips the names

<sup>14</sup> *Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction?*



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and addresses of Oberstein, La Rothière and Eduardo Lucas. But in the later case of the Bruce-Partington plans Sherlock sends a telegram to brother Mycroft asking him to furnish a list of foreign spies in London "with full address." Mycroft's prompt reply says that "the only men worth considering" are two of the three whom Holmes had so clearly in mind at the time of the Second Stain, plus Adolph Meyer, who had taken the place of Eduardo Lucas, deceased.

Even in a normal intelligence the passage of a single year would scarcely account for the gross lapse of memory which Messrs Bell and Blakeney are so unduly quick to attribute to Sherlock Holmes. And in the case of a man who had "an extraordinary genius for minutiae"<sup>15</sup> one must conclude that a much longer period elapsed between the two investigations. One may assume at least the revolution of that seven-year cycle in which both body and brain are said completely to replace their tissue. And, significantly enough, a little more than seven years prior to the date of the Bruce-Partington episode will place us at a time shortly prior to Dr Watson's first marriage. I am willing to concur in the scholarly analysis which has led Mr Blakeney to place this crucial date at or about November 1, 1887.

Other and more precise data will force the careful reader of *The Adventure of the Second Stain* to the conclusion that at the time of this adventure Dr Watson was neither married nor a recent widower.<sup>16</sup> The specific reference to "our humble room in Baker Street" could conceivably place us within the period of Watson's first widowerhood, from 1893 to 1896. But the doctor's pronounced susceptibility to the "beautiful, haunted face, the startled eyes and the drawn mouth" of Lady Hilda Trelawney Hope is

<sup>15</sup> *The Sign of the Four*.

<sup>16</sup> The death of the first Mrs Watson is generally conceded to have occurred in 1893. Cf. S. C. Roberts: *Doctor Watson*.



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strongly indicative of the psychology of a man ripe and ready for marriage, or perhaps long married. It certainly does not suggest the reaction of one only recently deprived of a very congenial mate. The authentic stamp of a bachelor ripe for the plucking is also evident in Watson's undisguised admiration for a comely female who is convicted by the facts of the story of being, to put it plainly, a perfect boob. And, finally, there is Holmes's jesting comment—"Now, Watson, the fair sex is your department." To a newly-married man, even more to a recent widower, such a remark would have verged on ribaldry, and would therefore have been impossible to one of Holmes's innate delicacy of feeling.

By close examination, therefore, we are able to establish the date of *The Adventure of the Second Stain* as prior, but not long prior, to September 7, 1887, when "the deep rich tones" of Mary Morstan's voice first presaged the approaching peal of wedding bells for Dr Watson.

*Finis coronat opus.* History confirms our research. In the spring of 1886 Mr Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was defeated and the subsequent general election swept Lord Salisbury, disguised by Watson as Lord Bellinger, into his second premiership. Salisbury promptly named Lord Iddesleigh, formerly Sir Stafford Northcote, as his Foreign Secretary, the post for which the "Secretary for European Affairs" in the *Second Stain* is an obvious blind.

Towards the close of that year—1886—occurred a series of startling Ministerial changes for which English historians have heretofore never been able fully to account. On Christmas Eve Lord Randolph Churchill resigned, almost without explanation, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr W. H. Smith, not to be confused with the railway book stalls, followed suit by surrendering the War Office. Lord Iddesleigh was then literally ousted from the post of Foreign Secretary, which the Prime Minister himself assumed



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on January 4, 1887. Eight days later, as J. A. R. Marriot tells us,<sup>18</sup> "the country was shocked to learn that he [Lord Iddesleigh] had died suddenly in the ante-room of the Premier's official residence at 10 Downing Street. Thus closed, amid circumstances almost tragic, a life of high utility and complete blamelessness."

How tragic the circumstances were the reader of *The Adventure of the Second Stain* can fully realize. While Holmes was able to restore the purloined letter he could not, evidently, prevent reports of Lord Iddesleigh's reckless carelessness with state papers from coming to the attention of the Cabinet. One recalls that Lady Hilda Trelawney Hope by her own admission "could not understand the consequences" in a matter of politics. I am on delicate ground, but it may be stated as a general rule that a lady who has twice been terribly indiscreet is not unlikely to err a third time. Lady Hilda must have mentioned, perhaps before the butler, Jacobs, how Holmes had restored the letter which seemed to her so relatively unimportant. At any rate a new light is thrown on the unexplained resignations from Lord Salisbury's Cabinet and the sudden, "almost tragic" death of his Foreign Secretary. And, more to the point, the date of *The Adventure of the Second Stain* is clearly established as in November, 1886.

And now, for the important footnote which I have still to add, I leave the field of ascertainable data for a flight of reasonable speculation which opens wide vistas to the imagination.

I would call attention, first, to the fact that while the personalities of Lord Salisbury and Lord Iddesleigh are indeed carefully concealed by Dr Watson, those of a much later Prime Minister and a much later Foreign Secretary are drawn to the life. Even without the revealing reference

<sup>18</sup> In his *England Since Waterloo*, p. 519.



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to his umbrella can there be any doubt as to the identity of the Premier who is described as "austere, high-nosed, eagle-eyed and dominant"? And can there be a second's hesitation in placing a Foreign Secretary who is photographed by Dr Watson as "dark, clear-cut, and elegant, hardly yet of middle age, and endowed with every beauty of body and mind"?

Even the pseudonym of the Right Honorable Trelawney Hope is revealing. Dr Watson, who reveled in the sea stories of Clark Russell, was doubtless equally partial to the fascinating romances of Anthony Hope. Many a less obvious clue led to a Holmesian triumph than that which the good Dr Watson offers us when he thus suggests that the Christian name of the Foreign Secretary is Anthony. And if Eden and Hope are not synonymous there is no justification for our lingering legends of a Golden Age.

I shall not bore you by developing every detail of an extraordinary parallel. But there is a contemporary dictator who fills, much better than the Kaiser, the description of the author of the letter in the Second Stain. May I read how the British Premier, the man with a "gaunt, ascetic face," the man with "deep-set eyes" and "shaggy eyebrows," the man, I had almost said, of Munich—how he describes the missive which found its way into the hands of Eduardo Lucas, later succeeded by Adolph Meyer to symbolize the Rome-Berlin axis?

"The letter, then, is from a certain foreign potentate who has been ruffled by some recent colonial developments of this country. It has been written hurriedly and upon his own responsibility entirely. Inquiries have shown that his ministers know nothing of the matter. At the same time it is couched in so unfortunate a manner, and certain phrases in it are of so provocative a character, that its publication would undoubtedly lead to a most dangerous state of feeling in this country. There would be such a ferment, sir,



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that I do not hesitate to say that within a week of the publication of that letter this country would be involved in a great war."

On hearing this, "Holmes wrote a name upon a slip of paper and handed it to the Premier." As clearly as though we had been looking over his shoulder we recognize that the name was *Hitler*.

I shall not go into all the corroborative evidence which shows that in 1886 Holmes was anticipating events of more than half-a-century later. There are many extraordinary anachronisms to which I would like to call your attention, as when Mr Chamberlain—Lord Bellinger I mean—tells Holmes that "The whole of Europe is an armed camp" and when he observes that "we cannot live forever on such a volcano." But all this you may check without effort in your own libraries. The way in which the modern setting clears up difficulties which have confronted other researchers is more worthy of our attention here.

There are references to *The Adventure of the Second Stain* in two of Dr Watson's other narratives. The longest of these references is at the beginning of *The Adventure of the Naval Treaty*. Here Watson says that "The July which immediately succeeded my marriage was made memorable by three cases of interest in which I had the privilege of being associated with Sherlock Holmes, and of studying his methods. I find them recorded in my notes under the headings 'The Adventure of the Second Stain,' 'The Adventure of the Naval Treaty,' and 'The Adventure of the Tired Captain.' "

Largely because he assumes that this dates *The Adventure of the Second Stain* as happening in July, 1888, Mr H. W. Bell concludes<sup>19</sup> that the adventure of that name "is clearly not the case published in the *Strand Magazine* in

<sup>19</sup> *Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson*, p. 58.



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December, 1904. "But Mr Bell forgets that Dr Watson was admittedly trying to conceal the date of "The Second Stain." And, furthermore, Watson does not say that this adventure occurred in July, 1888, although he does state with complete consistency, that "the new century will have to come . . . before the story can be safely told."

What Dr Watson evidently did in July, 1888, was to make full notes of the adventure which had occurred nearly two years earlier. Certainly this delay was careless, but carelessness rather ran in the Watson family. Moreover, it was not until early 1887 that the importance of the adventure was brought home to Watson by Lord Iddesleigh's sudden death. That year was perhaps the busiest ever seen by Baker Street. Mr Bell in his important chronology lists twelve important cases taken up by the partners in 1887, not including *The Sign of the Four*. About November 1 of that year, it is agreed, Watson married and thereafter was busy in buying and establishing a practice. Prior to July, 1888, such was the importance of the Second Stain, he probably feared even to make private notes about it.

There is another and a truly extraordinary reason for Mr Bell's confusion. "I still retain," says Watson at the outset of *The Adventure of the Naval Treaty*, "an almost verbatim account of the interview in which he [Holmes] demonstrated the true facts of the case to Monsieur Dubuque, of the Paris police, and Fritz von Waldbaum, the well-known specialist of Dantzic, both of whom had wasted their energies upon what proved to be side-issues."

Writing in 1932, it was reasonable for Mr Bell to conclude that the case which Holmes demonstrated to M Dubuque and Herr von Waldbaum had nothing to do with the letter of state lost by the Right Honorable Trelawney Hope. Writing today, one is far less sure. For if Holmes was acting in behalf of Neville Chamberlain and



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Anthony Eden in respect to an inflammatory letter from Hitler in November, 1938, it is precisely with the authorities in Paris and Dantzic that he would have been likely to make contact. And a fair guess as to the real identity of "the well-known specialist of Dantzic" would merge him with Herman Rauschning, the former head of the Nazi party in that once Free City, who after Munich renounced allegiance to the Fuehrer and published his now justly famous *Warning to the West*.

The second incidental reference to *The Adventure of the Second Stain* is found in *The Yellow Face* which Mr Bell with exceedingly little justification dates in 1882. This case was probably handled in the spring of 1887, though I shall spare you the reasoning for this conclusion, and the reference to the "Second Stain" which Dr Watson makes therein is therefore wholly in chronological order. Mr Bell, however, objects to the character rather than the timing of that brief reference which merely says: "Now and again . . . it chanced that even when he [Holmes] erred the truth was still discovered. I have notes of some half-dozen cases of the kind, of which the affair of the second stain, and that which I am now about to recount, are the two which present the strongest features of interest."

Although Mr Bell concludes<sup>20</sup> that Holmes "certainly did not err" in *The Adventure of the Second Stain* this is precisely what, in the well-chosen words of Dr Watson, he did. Thinking he had completely solved the mystery he says to Watson, "You will be relieved to hear that there will be no war, that the Right Honorable Trelawney Hope will suffer no setback in his brilliant career . . . that the Prime Minister will have no European complication to deal with . . ." Can it be said, comparing that boast with the situation today, that Holmes did not err, even though,

<sup>20</sup> Op. cit. p. 59.



*The Significance of the Second Stain*

in old Watson's truthful words, "the truth was still discovered"?

In endeavoring to prove that there were three different cases "which Watson associated with a second stain" Mr Bell charges that this expression "obsessed" Watson. Very probable, since the fact if not its definition obsesses everyone today. For what the good doctor was trying to tell us in the oft-repeated phrase was that a second stain of continental war would settle down upon Europe at a time when an umbrella-carrying British Prime Minister and an irresponsible German dictator would be the chief protagonists on that Continent. And even Sherlock Holmes could not foresee or avert what was involved.



## *Ballade of Baker Street*

BY CAROLYN WELLS

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I've followed many a devious way,  
 I've traveled fast and traveled far;  
 Beyond the night, across the day.  
 By many a mountain, lake, and scar.  
 'Neath ilex, palm, and deodar  
 I've viewed the homes of Fame's elite—  
 Ah, why does frowning fortune bar  
 Those hallowed rooms in Baker Street?

\*

There's Carlyle's house (you have to pay),  
 Houses of Shakespeare, Poe, Legare;  
 There's Landor's at Fiesole,  
 And Some One's Villa at Dinard.  
 Nero's and Borgia's houses jar,  
 Though Baedekers their charms repeat—  
 They should note with a double star  
 Those hallowed rooms in Baker Street.

My eager quest I would not stay  
 For jeweled house of Alnashar;  
 Diogenes' quaint tub of gray—  
 Historic Bough of old Omar—  
 Peterhof of the Russian Czar—  
 These were to me no special treat,  
 Could I but reach, by cab or car,  
 Those hallowed rooms in Baker Street.



L'ENVOI

Sherlock! My fondest wishes are  
That on a day I yet may greet,  
Haply in some far avatar,  
Those hallowed rooms in Baker Street.



## *A Scandal in Identity*

BY EDGAR W. SMITH

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*It is entirely within the right and province of the earnest student, so long as he maintains a proper reverence, to speculate upon who might have been who among the hundreds of personages, great and small, who walked and talked with Sherlock Holmes. Plausible interpretation of the evidence available in the canon itself is deemed sufficient ground for such speculation, but when worldly fact or circumstance can be adduced in substantiation of the conclusions reached, there is no reason why these data cannot also be admitted. It is interesting to note, therefore, apropos of this attempt to identify alleged Bohemian royalty with another reigning house, that Mr Fletcher Pratt has very cogently pointed out that on the death in 1611 of Mathias, the last King of Bohemia of the old line, the estates of the country met and elected Ferdinand, Count Palatine, known as the Winter King and hero of the episode called the defenestration of Prague. Ferdinand was ejected from his kingdom during the Thirty Years' War, and the Hapsburgs took over; but this does not affect the juridical value of Ferdinand's title. As Count Palatine, Ferdinand was suzerain of Hanover, or more specifically of the Duchy of Lüneburg, and the Bohemian title passed into that Duchy and so into the house of Hanover. It must be, then, as Mr Pratt asserts, that the Bohemian legitimists (if there are any such) can recognize only the House of Hanover as having any proper claim to the throne. This*



## *A Scandal in Identity*

*testimony, capping the internal evidence to be read within the canon, seems to clinch the argument.*

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“I shall not lament the loss of my incognito, for it enables me to thank you with the more authority.”

THESE WORDS, spoken by a royal personage from whose shoulders a terrible load had just been lifted, might well have been the words that fell upon the ears of Sherlock Holmes, one day in March of 1888, when he told a certain illustrious client that he had saved him forever from the machinations of a beautiful New Jersey prima donna. Yes, these words might well have been spoken by one who called himself Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Falstein and hereditary King of Bohemia.

But they were not.

They were, indeed, the words of a roistering prince whose love of life and living had brought him adventures comparable in excitement, if not in enchantment, with those that waited in the arms of Irene Adler. They were, furthermore, the words of a noble adventurer who had chosen to identify himself, for purposes of discretion, with the fair and appropriate land of Bohemia. They were the words addressed in 1878 to a certain Brackenbury Rich, a dashing lieutenant in Her Majesty's forces who had greatly distinguished himself in one of the lesser Indian hill wars, by one who called himself Prince Florizel. And as authority for their utterance we have the testimony not of John H. Watson, M.D., Late Indian Army, but of Robert Louis Stevenson, who chronicled, in his *New Arabian Nights*, the doings of this royal blade.

Yet we cannot doubt, on the strength of the evidence



### *The Baker Street Scene*

available in the two accounts, that Gottsreich and Florizel were one being and the same. However carefully the two narrators may have tried to give their heroes individuality, the likeness of their propensities, their characters, their very persons, shines with the clarity of a beacon through the pages of the tales in which their deeds are told.

Tall, powerful, with the chest and limbs of a Hercules, it could be said of either that he "was not without a taste for ways of life more adventurous and eccentric than that to which he was destined by his birth." These are attributes, surely, which would lead their possessor to seek membership not only in the Suicide Club but also in that other fatal fraternity—smaller, we may hope—which worshipped at the intimate shrine of Irene Adler. We are told, furthermore, that Prince Florizel "gained the affection of all classes by the seduction of his manner and by a well-considered generosity." How patly that description fits the arts and means employed by Gottsreich in the attainment of his amorous ends with the beauteous diva! And what phrase applies more aptly to the sentiments that moved in Gottsreich's breast than that which speaks of Florizel as being "conscious of a certain joy in his alarms"—especially if the order of reference to these emotions be reversed? Above all, we cannot think of Holmes's gentle chiding of the blushing Gottsreich—"Your Majesty has indeed committed an indiscretion"—without recalling the poignant words of self-rebuke which constitute so appropriate a response: "Ah, Florizel! Florizel! when will you learn the discretion that suits mortal life—?"

It is significant, also, that in their pursuit of the adventurous and the eccentric, both of these royal dilettantes revealed a rather callow faith in the use of masquerade: there is a convincing psychological correspondence between Gottsreich's hopeful resort to a black vizard mask in his meeting with Sherlock Holmes (he would, of course,



have expected the Master to penetrate any more subtle attempt at concealment), and the travesty attained by Florizel through "the addition of false whiskers and a pair of large adhesive eyebrows" which emboldened him to venture into the Oyster Bar in Leicester Square. Neither effort at disguise, we may suppose, was any more successful in the end than the efforts Messrs Stevenson and Watson have made to deceive us with respect to the common identity of these two scions of a royal branch.

For the evidence of their being one is abundant and cumulative. Stevenson says of his creature that "to collect all the strange events in which the Prince has played the part of Providence were to fill the habitable world with books." To play the part of Providence to Irene Adler, as Gottsreich by his own admission did, proved a strange event indeed, and one which must have filled *his* habitable world to the overflowing. Yet after the unique experience of long association with this queen among women, in the years which saw the lovely adventuress converted to an out-of-circulation Mrs Godfrey Norton, he must have longed again for other strange events, as thrilling and as dangerous as those recounted in the history of the *Young Man with the Cream Tarts*, and the *Physician and the Saratoga Trunk*, and the *Adventure of the Hansom Cab*.

One further argument pointing to the identity of these two limbs of royalty remains to be advanced, and it may then be said that the case has been established beyond cavil. In trait and mien and bearing we have seen that the two were indistinguishable. But if it can be proved that they had recourse to the same provider of relief and protection in an hour not only of moral, but also of material peril, we may hail the coincidence as overwhelming.

We know, of course, to whom the embattled Gottsreich turned when blackmail reared its ugly head and ruin loomed upon the horizon, no farther off than St John's



### *The Baker Street Scene*

Wood. But we are not told who it was, years earlier, who had engineered the escape of Florizel from the equally imminent, but purely physical terrors of the Suicide Club. "All has been managed by the simplest means," the faithful Colonel Geraldine reported. "I arranged this afternoon with a celebrated detective. Secrecy has been promised and paid for." Who could have merited the trust of Florizel's entourage in this previous hour of royal need? Who could have been brought to share the sacred confidence of this differently dangerous escapade? Who, indeed, but that same Great Man who was to serve the smitten Gottsreich so discreetly and so well in 1888?

All this we may take, it is felt, as proof bordering upon the canonical. But there is more than coincidence in nomenclature, more than coincidence in background, inclination and spirit, in the recital from these two different sources of the high adventures of a Bohemian of royal blood and bearing. Successful as we have been in identifying the two personages with each other, we cannot be satisfied to stop there. It is not enough to conclude that Gottsreich and Florizel were one: the very fact of their common identity carries within itself the seeds of even deeper significance, and imposes a demand for even more profound speculation. Logic dictates that no two men could be quite so much alike if they were the figment of imagination alone, or if they depended solely upon each other for mutual evidence of their reality. Behind them both, to make them plausible, there must lie a single implicit denominator; a prototype; the ultimate reality from which their own twin reality has sprung.

Stevenson and Watson, in their laudable delicacy as Englishmen respectful of the English crown, were at pains to conceal the true identity of their common hero by giving him the common device of an alien loyalty. Watson,



indeed—unless it was Gottsreich himself, enjoying his predilection for the assumption of disguise—attempted to carry the deception to the rather absurd lengths of introducing a richness of dress “which would, in England, be looked upon as akin to bad taste.” The matter of the “strongly marked German accent” is, of course, a cat of a different color, as we shall see in our subsequent speculations. Despite his accent, however, it is significant that Gottsreich’s idiom was as fluent as that of Florizel himself: it is beside the point that Stevenson, for reasons of his own, saw fit to omit the use of either a comedian’s brogue or a transposed verb.

It is difficult at all times, in this connection, to distinguish between the deceptions practiced by the narrators, in their patriotic reverence, and those practiced by the protagonists themselves in the normal fulfillment of the rôles they played. Florizel, for example, might understandably have wished to conceal his nationality in the relations he had with the President of the Suicide Club, but he could not reasonably have expected to pass as a foreigner in the eyes of his intimate, Colonel Geraldine. Gottsreich, similarly, may have hoped to deceive Holmes, either by his first alias of Count von Kramm, or by surprising him later into recognition of one of his honorary foreign titles; but we cannot believe that he got as far as he did in his relations with Irene Adler without at least giving his right name. The weight of the evidence, in the last analysis, seems clearly to lie against the biographers as the real culprits in the deception attempted, although we cannot, of course, be critical in any way of the purity and validity of their motive.

We must, in any event, in plumbing for the deeper truth, ask who these men were if they were not what they or their biographers pretended. Granting that they were equal to



each other, to what third integer were they equal? Who was the substance behind the dual shadow; who was the power behind, and incarnating, the throne?

It is Watson, bless his honest soul, who has—unwittingly, as usual—given us the answer. Always delicate in his recitals where less than licit relations between the sexes were concerned (as witness his reluctance for many years to permit the publication in book form of the slightly risqué *Adventure of the Cardboard Box*), it was inevitable that he should have drawn the veil as obscurely as he could over the identity of one who loved not wisely, but too royally. Yet when the situation was one which did not openly have to do with an affair of the heart—when it was a mere matter, in other words, of defalcation of public trust involving the pawning of the Crown Jewels—his sense of delicacy is less strained, and he leaves the veil much thinner. For, it will be recalled, he permits Alexander Holder to tell us that the client who pledged the priceless beryl coronet bore “a name which is a household word all over the earth—one of the highest, noblest, most exalted names in England.”

The connection and the conclusion are obvious. The threatened *Scandal in Bohemia* occurred in 1888. *The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet* occurred in 1882. Gottsreich, by his own statement, had made the acquaintance of Irene Adler “some five years ago.” She was a woman who “eclipsed and predominated the whole of her sex,” and it is not to be doubted that she had insisted, in the very earliest days of her royal liaison, upon a *quid pro quo* which even now would be looked upon as rather handsome. What woman, we may ask, could have commanded as the price for her favors the princely sum of £50,000? Only Irene Adler. What man, in his eager need to clinch the amorous bargain, could have pawned “one of the most precious *public* possessions of the Empire?”



## *A Scandal in Identity*

There is, of course, but one answer. The syllogism is complete: it is Dr Watson himself who has made the case for us, and who has given us all but the prince's very name and title. He was a prince of the royal blood indeed—a prince whose family came of Teutonic stock, and who spoke, if hearsay is to be believed, with a "strongly marked German accent" to the day of his death. His name and title were household words when Watson and Stevenson wrote, and they are household words today, both in America and in the realm over which he came to reign. They have been perpetuated in history by virtue of his own accomplishments; but they have been perpetuated even more surely by virtue of the renown the tailor and the tobacconist have brought him. . . .

Let us look at the record with a critical and sober eye. Gottsreich, or "Berty," as Irene probably called him, confided to Sherlock Holmes that he was 30 years of age in that year of 1888 when the crisis in his Adlerian relations occurred. Mundane history insists that the true prince, as we must henceforth call him, was 47 in that year. It is in the very fact of his apparent discrepancy, this seeming contradiction, that proof positive of our thesis is seen to lie.

Irene Adler, in that same year, was also 30. She was at the zenith of her powers, in the full bloom of her vocal and other perfections. She was the type of contralto, if the record may be read clearly, who would be unlikely either to inspire or to relish a nocturnal demand upon her to arise and sing. Her claims upon life were, we may suppose, both vigorous and enthusiastic; sound business-woman though she was, her requirements of those who sought her favor were not likely to be of a financial order alone. No middle-aged prince, confident though he must have been of his ultimate prowess, would have risked the rebuff which might have come to his initial approaches if he had given his right age. Competent in the art of make-up—as



witness his propensity for more grotesque disguises—he added the attraction of simulated youth to the attractions of pelf and position he already commanded. Irene Adler, of course, had access to the *Almanach de Gotha* as a handy *Bradstreet's* appropriate to her trade; but if she penetrated the deception, as we may well believe she did, there is no evidence to show that she resented the compliment it so patently represented, or that she sought to undeceive the prince in the pride of his pretensions. Committed as he was to the youthful role he had assumed, and deluded into believing he was getting away with it, the prince's duplicity grew upon him, no doubt, and perpetuated itself as a sort of second nature—so that even in the confidential atmosphere of Baker Street he still lied like a gentleman and shrugged aside his superfluous seventeen years.

So, too, with the rather more delicate matter of his domestic status. Gottsreich told Holmes—as he undoubtedly told Irene Adler—that he was “about to be married” to Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen, second daughter of the King of Scandinavia. The true prince had been married—to a daughter of the King of Denmark—for all of twenty-two years. But here the deception attempted by the royal *entreteneur*—unless it was Watson himself who was doing his modest bit in trying to clean the story up—is one, we must admit, that is even more common among mortal men, and less discernible on the face of things, than the liberties taken in the matter of acknowledged years. It is doubtful again that Irene was unaware of the existence of an uxorial lien upon her consort; but she could well afford a certain degree of tolerance, as we have seen, and if she really knew of his nuptial obligations, she did not seem to care—and neither, for that matter, did Sherlock Holmes. For it was not necessarily the infringement of the marriage vow that led Holmes from the beginning to assume a brusque and unceremonious attitude toward his client: it was, it may



be ventured, the shameless flaunting of the symbol of that former breach of trust which the Master was quick to observe on the person of his visitor the moment he set his foot within the door. It is Watson, again, who innocently reveals the basis for Holmes's ill-concealed antagonism, when, in noting the flamboyant attire which Gottsreich affected, he remarks that his cloak was "*secured at the neck with a brooch which consisted of a single flaming beryl.*"

Tactless as it was of the prince to have chosen this significant jewel for his adornment when he called upon Holmes in 1888, we may suspect that Holmes had other reasons still to hold his royal client in something less than royal admiration. The episode of the hypothecated coronet, in 1882, was not in itself a matter likely to have aroused the Master's enthusiasm, and we can also believe that a certain degree of prejudice had been created, four years even before that, when the struggling young detective with rooms in Montague Street was first called upon to intervene in the reckless goings-on *à propos* the Suicide Club. We are, furthermore, given a hint of another episode, this time in 1886, which must have shown which way the wind had then begun to blow, and which must, in consequence, have brought annoyance to the stern Sherlockian mind. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, it will be recalled, Holmes told Watson that "at the present instant, one of the most revered names in England is being besmirched by a black-mailer, and only I can stop a disastrous scandal." Surely the Master had reason to be petulant; yet for all of his righteous indignation at the prince's chronic faculty for keeping himself in hot water, the prince himself seems to have refused to bear ill-will in return. For it is not to be doubted that he was a party *en famille* to the selection of the "remarkably fine emerald tie-pin" which was bestowed upon the Great Man in 1895 by "a certain gracious lady" resident at Windsor and also surnamed Wettin, and it was



this same illustrious client, surely, who intervened by proxy, as late as 1902, to induce Holmes to save the lovely Violet de Merville from the clutches of the unspeakable Baron Gruner.

Whatever may have taken place in other years, at all events, it may well be said that the year 1888 was the truly critical one in the life of our royal hero. From 1882 to 1887, Irene Adler had left him time and strength to do the odd jobs that majesty is called upon to do: beginning again in 1889 he played his wonted part in the statecraft of his realm, doubtless with occasional interludes of the same adventurous nature as those of which Stevenson has given us so charming a glimpse. But the black year 1888 saw the imminent threat of Scandal in what was indeed an allegorical Bohemia; when, but for the grace of Sherlock Holmes, the prince's world would have crashed in ruins about his princely ears. The climax came in the first weeks of the year, and it was passed in March; but it left a deep and bleeding wound, and for long months afterward the royal will remained paralyzed, the royal brain remained bemused. Participation in any manner of public affairs became an utter impossibility, a hiatus developed in the record of the prince's service to his state which, in mundane history, stands revealed in the bold emphasis of omission. I quote, in confirmation, from *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

"In 1886, he filled the presidency of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition, opened the Mersey Tunnel, and laid the first stone of the Tower Bridge. In 1887 a large share of the arrangements for the queen's Jubilee devolved upon him. On the 27th of July, 1889, his eldest daughter, Princess Louise, was married to the Duke of Fife."

This is, indeed, an eloquent commentary upon the curious incident of the gay dog who did much in the night-time, but nothing in the year 1888.

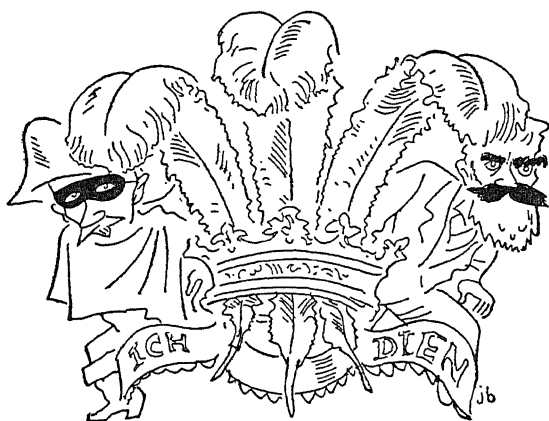


## *A Scandal in Identity*

We can have, in our hearts, only understanding and compassion for this lusty prince who looked at all of life and found it good. We marvel at the courage he displayed as he gamed with worse than death at the loathsome table in the Suicide Club. We envy him the energy and sagacity with which he ran the foul assassins at last to earth. We see him for the princely role he played—brave, dashing, reckless, imperious in turn, yet in the end the stern and calm repository of even-handed justice. We see him in another and a softer phase of his adventurous career, dallying with “the daintiest thing under a bonnet on this planet,” held in the thrall of adoration for one who turned the head, if not the heart, of Sherlock Holmes himself.

Far be it from us to condemn as frailty the affection this man bore, so long and so sincerely, for this woman. When it was all over—if it ever *was* all over—he held no resentment for the way she had cast him off for another; he cherished her memory, we may be sure, as a very precious and a very lasting thing.

And so must we. For Irene Adler, to any who have trodden the stones of Baker Street, will always be, as she was to Florizel and Gottsreich and Sherlock Holmes alike, *The Woman*.



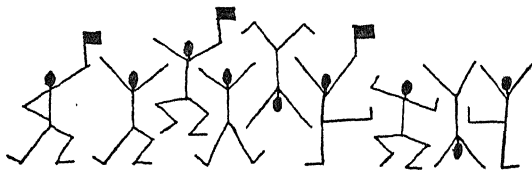


## *The Secret Message of the Dancing Men*

BY FLETCHER PRATT

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*It is one of the mysteries within the mysteries that Dr Watson should have made an elementary substitution cipher the backbone and dramatic focus of The Adventure of the Dancing Men, a tale which is otherwise curiously lacking in mysteriousness. And it is a matter of frequent embarrassment to admirers of Holmes's analytical powers that the master should have been baffled for as long as he was by the simple little men who danced on the sun dial. Both of these disturbing circumstances have been pondered long and profoundly by the noted authority on naval strategy, cryptography and Sherlockismus, Mr Fletcher Pratt, whose reputation for probity in all things is unimpaired by his fundamental belief that codes are made to be broken. Mr Pratt's brilliant explanation of the apparently irreconcilable facts in the Riding Thorpe Manor case is satisfying both logically and sentimentally. The mystery is a mystery no longer, and embarrassment gives way gladly to a new feeling of amazement and awe in the presence of Holmes's incredible genius. No wonder that Watson wrote: "My mind filled with admiration for this extraordinary man!"*





## *The Secret Message of the Dancing Men*

EVERY READER WHO has approached the Sacred Writings with the slightest knowledge of cryptography has been, I think, fascinated by the problem of the dancing men; not because the puzzle Holmes solved was so very abstruse, but because one can hardly imagine a cryptographer of such merit devoting so much time to it when he was already engaged in chemical research of some complexity.<sup>1</sup> Of two problems the great investigator always chose the more difficult, and we know that he was a cryptanalyst of extraordinary merit and intuition, as witness the cases of the "Gloria Scott" and the Musgrave ritual, where he solved problems that would have taxed the powers of a Rossignol or a Kasiski.

Why should a problem in simple substitution prove so difficult to such a man that (as Watson tells us) he had to spend two hours "in intricate and elaborate calculation," covering "sheet after sheet of paper with figures and letters"? Why should he make a mystery to Watson of the significance of the little lines of gnomes who danced their way across Mr Hilton Cubitt's sun dial? Indeed, how could he?

The tales of Poe were part of their familiar conversation;<sup>2</sup> surely the biographer must have been familiar with *The Gold Bug*, in which the methods of dealing with just such a simple substitution cipher as that of the dancing men are set forth with admirable clarity. Watson would have been something less than human if he failed to attempt to apply these methods when Mr Cubitt brought in the second series of messages. Yet Watson mentions nothing of the kind; the dancing figures were a mystery to him, not because he could not solve their meaning, but because he did not think they had any.

The story is flatly incredible, but only if we assume that

<sup>1</sup> *The Adventure of the Dancing Men.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Resident Patient.*



Watson is giving us the entire truth, a weakness seldom found in biographers in general and in this biographer in particular. Observe the extraordinary difficulty to which Mr H. W. Bell was put in identifying three quite ordinary addresses as chronicled in the tales,<sup>3</sup> and the disguises Watson was so frequently forced to adopt for living persons in view of the British libel laws. That is, while adhering to the essential facts, Watson was always willing to alter details in the presence of a motive sufficiently strong for doing so. In the present case we have evidence of the motive; and we have both external and internal evidence that Watson tampered with the facts.

First the external evidence: Watson informs us that the cipher of the dancing men was devised by Mrs Elsie Cubitt's father, an individual named Patrick, who kept a "joint" (presumably a saloon) in Chicago when she was a child. This must have been at least some 15 years before the tragedy at Riding Thorpe Manor, which occurred a year after the marriage of the Cubitts, which in turn took place when Mr Hilton Cubitt went "up to London for the Jubilee"—assuredly the Diamond Jubilee of 1897. This would throw the date when the gang centered around Patrick's joint into the early '80s.

By 1898 the gang seems either to have broken up or to have extended its operations very widely indeed. Wilson Hargreave of the New York Police Bureau<sup>4</sup> referred to Abe Slaney as "the most dangerous crook in Chicago." It does not matter, for the purposes of this inquiry, whether Slaney achieved that title through the one process or the other. The point is that the Patrick gang and their operations were thoroughly known to the police of the two larg-

<sup>3</sup> "Three Identifications," in *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*.

<sup>4</sup> This was Watson's error; it was even then the New York Police *Department*.



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est cities of America. Obviously the officer of the law would be familiar with the methods of communication employed by a gang that contained the man who was the public enemy number one of his day.

As a matter of fact, records have been made and data gathered as to the crook-ciphers of the period.<sup>5</sup> Already, by 1877, the criminals of America at least had advanced far beyond the elementary simple substitution type of cipher represented by the dancing men. The 1880 report of the Chicago Police Commission bears testimony to the same effect. The ciphers actually in use by the Chicago criminals of the time were of two general types. One is known as the root cipher, in which the words or letters of the original message are written down in their normal order but in a block, then taken off according to a prearranged zigzag route. The other type in use was the Vigenère tableau, or double substitution type, one of the most complex and difficult of all ciphers. Using simple substitution instead of this would be like trying to solve a problem in integral calculus by the methods of ordinary arithmetic.

It is clear from this that the cipher of the dancing men would have been absurdly simple both to Chicago crooks and to the Chicago police of the period; and old man Patrick, keeper of the joint and head of a Chicago gang, would have known it. If he did not, he would speedily have been undeceived at the first attempt to use his new invention. Yet in Watson's account we are presented with a cipher which has not only resisted the efforts of the officers of the law (since it is still in use) but has resisted them for something like fifteen years; and which it takes the great Holmes over two hours to unravel.

We are driven almost irresistibly to the conclusion that

<sup>5</sup> See Hans Gross—*Criminal Investigation*; also *Criminals of Europe and America*, edited by George S. McWatters, Hartford, Conn., 1877.



the cipher in the printed account was no more the one actually used than Upper Swandam Lane<sup>6</sup> was actually named Upper Swandam Lane.

The internal evidence points to the same conclusion. If the cipher of the dancing men is far too simple for practical use, with its single unvarying character for each letter, it is also far too complex for a simple substitution cipher. It offers too many opportunities for variation of which no advantage has been taken. Let us consider the little mannekins in detail.

They exhibit three possible arm positions: with the arms outstretched to a 45-degree angle above the head; in the hieratic attitude, with elbows bent and hands beside the head; and with hands on hips. Moreover, it is not necessary that both arms be in the same position; in the letter presented to us as L they are not. It is not necessary that there be more than one arm; the characters offered by Watson as G and D have only one, and that supposed to represent B has none. That is, the sum of the possible arm positions in their various combinations is 16.

With the leg positions the situation is even more complicated. The legs may be straight down; they may be extended at a 45-degree angle to the trunk; the knee may be bent back at a right angle to this 45-degree angle; it may descend straight to the ground, it may be sharply flexed back at an acute angle; the whole leg may be straight out at a 90-degree angle to the front, and in this position the knee may be bent. That is, there are no less than seven possible positions; and as with the arms these can appear in any combinations. I, S and L show legs in variant combinations. The total possibilities are represented by the square of the individual positions; that is, there are 49 possible leg combinations.

<sup>6</sup> *The Man with the Twisted Lip.*



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Now any arrangement of arms may be associated with any arrangement of legs, *vide* M and N, differentiated solely by the arms. When we combine the various leg possibilities with the various arm possibilities the result is represented by the multiplication of the possible arm and leg types and we obtain the astonishing figure of 784 possible little dancing men to be made with the elements shown in those few messages. But this is not all: D, G and T show the little figures standing on their heads, and T is simply an E in reverse. Obviously the meaning of any one of the 784 characters can be changed by turning it upside down, which doubles the total, giving 1568 possible characters.

The statement that the cipher of the dancing men is erected on far too complex a basis for so elementary a cipher hardly needs any further proof. But additional proof is actually available. In the reign of Louis XIV of France, Rossignol, one of the greatest cryptographers that ever lived, compiled a "Great Cipher" for the king. Many messages were written in it and a good part of them survived, but no one succeeded in deciphering them till they were read, late in the nineteenth century, putatively by Commandant Bazèries of the French army, though we may suspect that one of Holmes's visits to France had something to do with the deciphering. The discovered messages in the Great Cipher show a total of 587 different characters; but not all the possible characters are used, and when the permutations and combinations were studied by Bazèries he reported that the possible total of characters was exactly 1568.

The long arm of coincidence would have to stretch itself right out of joint to cover such a set of figures if it were accidental. We have good reason to believe that it was not accidental; that with the connivance and assistance of Holmes, Watson deliberately eliminated from the record



the cipher used by Abe Slaney (probably, as we have seen, a root cipher or a variant on the Vigenère tableau) and inserted in its place this other.

Here we come to the question of motives. Why should the great detective embark on so extraordinary a device? There are reasons.

The record was compiled at a period when the second most dangerous man in London was dead. But there is no record of the destruction of "that charming society whose leader now lies under the Reichenbach Fall."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, there is every reason to believe that it still existed. One of its members is mentioned by name—Parker, that "garroter by trade and remarkable performer on the Jewsharp."<sup>8</sup> At a somewhat later date, this society was to wrench a victim from the very arms of Holmes,<sup>9</sup> and at that time it was working in association with American gangs.

What, then, more natural than that Holmes should wish to place on record some account of its membership and activities in case these formidable desperadoes should, through some accident, remove him from the scene? Consider his position: such a record could hardly be left with the official police, who would be apt to take some summary and unwise action, resulting in the escape of the whole group. No more could it be left to the access of the general public, for we know on the precedent of Colonel Sebastian Moran that some of the gang at least moved in the highest society and would be quick to take legal action under the statute of libel. Therefore Holmes adopted a method natural and obvious to a cryptographer who must have been familiar with the then-recent solution of the Rossignol Great Cipher and the furor that solution had caused.

<sup>7</sup> *The Adventure of the Empty House.*

<sup>8</sup> *The Adventure of the Empty House.*

<sup>9</sup> *The Valley of Fear.*



## *The Secret Message of the Dancing Men*

He produced a variant on the Great Cipher, one possessing the same total number of characters, and wrote his record in it. He caused Watson to insert this record in his account of the events at Riding Thorpe Manor in place of the messages actually discovered by the unfortunate Mr Cubitt and sat down to wait, convinced that his record would remain concealed until discovered by a cryptographer whose skill and discretion equalled his own.

For it is the special characteristic of the Rossignol Great Cipher that it may contain two meanings. One of these is its exterior, surface significance, in attaining which each character represents a single letter of the original message. This is the meaning offered to us in Watson's account. The second, the deeper meaning, is achieved by having each character stand for a syllable or an entire word of the original text. With a vocabulary of 1568 words and syllables much can be expressed. The whole of Basic English contains only a little over half as many words.

But what is the message Holmes wished to convey by this unconventional means? There, I fear, I am somewhat at fault, not being that second Holmes whom he anticipated. The analysts who might discover the secret are mostly too busy with war work. I can only throw out a suggestion for some one of them to undertake when he is able.

In the accumulation of messages given to us in the case of the dancing men the character supposed to represent E is incomparably the most frequent. In a total of 70 characters it appears no less than 16 times. There is no word in English that possesses so high a frequency; indeed no letter, not even E. But if we assume that the cipher contains both words and syllables as the Great Cipher of Rossignol did, the syllable TH, which could alternately stand for the word THE (a common practice in syllabic ciphers), would have almost exactly this order of frequency. We



*The Baker Street Scene*

may safely assume, therefore, that the figure supposed to represent E actually stands for TH or THE.

But beyond that point I fear I must leave the necessary research to other hands.



## *Three Identifications*

BY H. W. BELL

---

*Dr Watson often deliberately concealed the identity of places in his saga where great events occurred. He refused, for fear of its being "injudicious and offensive," to reveal the location of the college of "St Luke's," where The Three Students fell under suspicion for a deed that would have led all proud alumni to shed the old school tie; and in The Adventure of the Creeping Man he resorted to the device of composite nomenclature on the theory, evidently, that only a neutralized "Camford" would have tolerated for so long a professor of quadrupedal and arboreal habits. Some of his broader camouflages, of course, are quickly penetrated—the "Valley of Fear" where the Scowrers flourished is easily recognized as the Shenandoah, notorious for its Molly Maguires—but his Greater London is often a maze of confusions, and his English countryside a scrambled and dubious land. The student is therefore under deep obligation to Mr H. W. Bell, whose standard chronology of the tales is the last word on that subject, for the brilliant work he has done in tearing the veil from many of Watson's studied obfuscations. Mr Bell, in consequence of his historic controversy with the late Dr Gray Chandler Briggs, has thrown a steady and revealing light on the perennial question of the true location of the house at number 221B, Baker Street; elsewhere, he has dealt beyond further cavil with the issues related to the identity of Lauriston Gardens, Upper Swandam Lane, Saxe-Coburg*



## *The Baker Street Scene*

*Square and many other localities which Watson saw fit to suggest rather than to name. In his present contribution, Mr Bell provides us with three new identifications which serve to give validity to the workaday world all about us by drawing it closer to the world of Holmes and Watson.*

---

### I

#### TWO LOCALITIES IN THE SIX NAPOLEONS

ONE OF THE casts of Devine's bust of Napoleon had been purchased by Mr Horace Harker, of the Central Press Syndicate, for his house at No. 131, Pitt Street, Kensington. Watson describes the house as "one of a row, all flat-chested, respectable, and most unromantic dwellings," with an area and railings. There are not many houses in the street<sup>1</sup>, and most of them have bow-windows and a low balustrade in front; but a group of five<sup>2</sup> corresponds in every way to Watson's account. One of them must have been the scene of Beppo's theft of the bust and of his murder of Pietro Venucci. The number as reported is a disguise. Perhaps it stands for No. 14.

To Holmes's inquiry about the fate of the bust, Lestrade replied that it had been found in "the front garden of an empty house in Campden House Road," which, as Watson presently informs us, was only a few hundred yards away. There is no Campden *House* Road. Watson certainly meant to write Campden Hill Road, but his eye was caught by the word "house" immediately before, in the same sentence. In this long street only two houses<sup>3</sup> within a reasonable distance of Pitt Street possess front grass-plots; the others are separated from the pavement by narrow sunken

<sup>1</sup> They are numbered 1-13, and 2-18.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 10-18.

<sup>3</sup> Nos. 49 and 51.



# The Mirror

OF

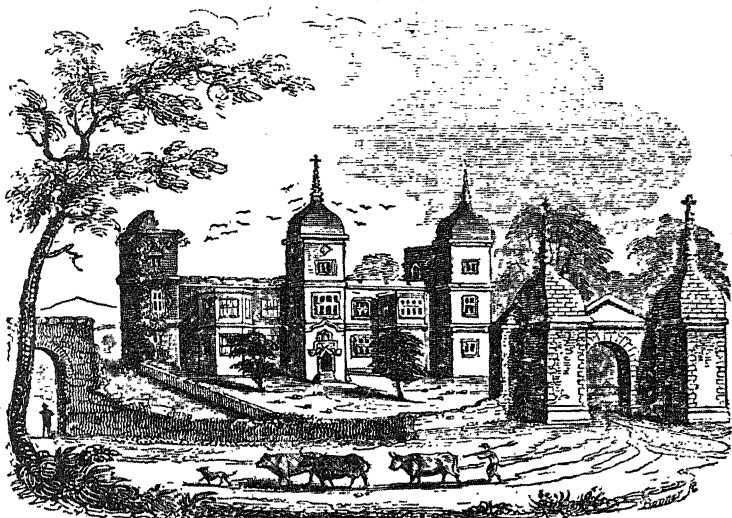
LITERATURE, AMUSEMENT, AND INSTRUCTION.

No. 279.]

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20. 1827.

[PRICE 2d.]

## Brambletye House.



ON the borders of Ashdown Forest, in the county of Sussex, stands the above picturesque ruin of Brambletye House, whose lettered fame may be dated from the publication of Mr. Smith's novel of that name, in January, 1826. The ruin has since attracted scores of tourists, as we were, on our recent visit, informed by the occupier of the adjoining farm-house; which circumstance coupled with the high literary success of Mr. Smith's novel, has induced us to select Brambletye House for the illustration of our present number.

Brambletye, or, as it is termed in

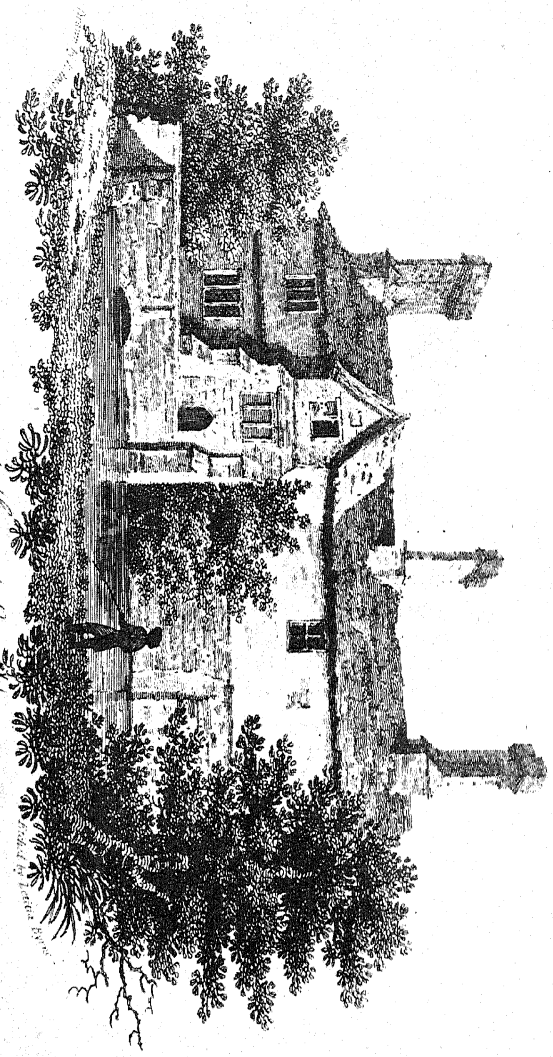
Doomsday Book, Brambertie House, after the conquest, became the property of the Earl of Mortain and Cornwall, forming part of the barony then conferred upon him, and subsequently denominated the honour of the eagle. Passing into possession of the Andehams, Saint Clares; and several others, it came into the occupation of the Comptons, towards the beginning of the seventeenth century; and from the arms of that family impaling those of Spencer, still remaining over the principal entrance, with the date 1631 in a lozenge, it is conjectured that the old





*Walled House at Brambridge.*

*Engraving published by Edmund Tuck, Manchester, 1840.*

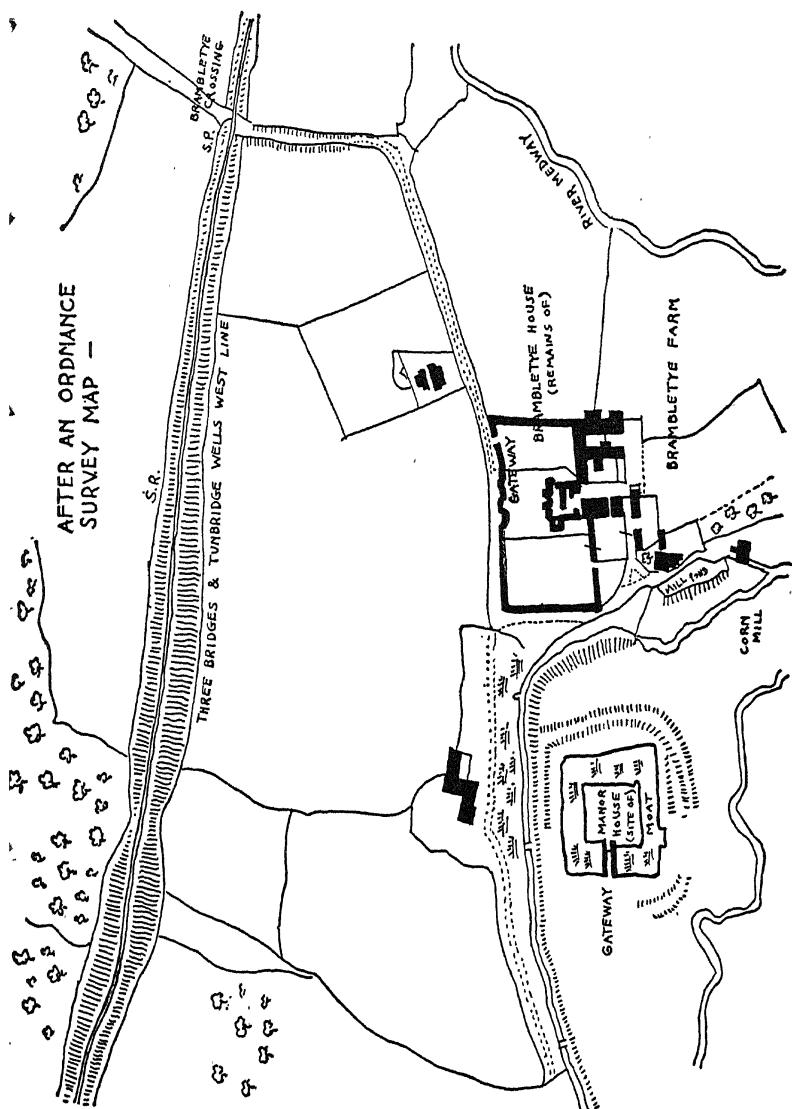


★

★



# Three Identifications





## *The Bakeř Street Scene*

areas. On the pavement before one of them, No. 51, is a lamppost, as required by the narrative. It is less than 400 yards from the group of five houses in Pitt Street.

## II

### THE DRIVE TO THADDEUS SHOLTO'S HOUSE

In the course of the drive from the Lyceum Theatre to Thaddeus Sholto's house, Holmes, who has been mentioning the names of some of the streets which they pass by<sup>1</sup> or traverse, announces, "Robert Street," and presently, "Coldharbour Lane." Here the question arises: at what point did they reach that long and curving street? From a study of the map it might be thought that when the fourwheeler had turned from Stockwell Park Road<sup>2</sup> into Robert Street,<sup>3</sup> it must have crossed Brixton Road into Loughborough Road, and have proceeded either along it, or via Lilford Road, to Coldharbour Lane.

It should be noted, however, that the drive continued for a considerable distance beyond the point at which Holmes made his last recorded topographical observation<sup>4</sup>, and that the direction indicated by such an itinerary brings one almost immediately after crossing Coldharbour Lane into the South-Eastern postal district, whereas Sholto's letter was

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Larkhall Lane.

<sup>2</sup> Recorded by Watson as "Stockwell Place." There is, and was, no street of that name.

<sup>3</sup> The mention of this street is not without interest. On 30 April, 1880, it was combined with Park Street to form Robsart Street, of which it forms the eastern end. For Holmes to have recognized it by night and in a fog, and to have called it by a name which it had not borne in seven years and a half, indicates that at some period, before meeting Watson, he must have had an intimate knowledge of the district.

<sup>4</sup> He may well have continued muttering street names; but by that time Watson was no longer in any condition to hear them. It was probably in this part of South London that he related to Miss Morstan the very original use to which he had put a double-barrelled tiger-cub.



### *Three Identifications*

postmarked "London, S.W." Thus it appears that when the carriage had traversed Robert (i.e., Robsart) Street, it turned to the right into Brixton Road and so reached Coldharbour Lane. Thereafter its route remains purely conjectural.

## III

### BIRLSTONE MANOR

We are told that Birlstone Manor was situated about half a mile from the village of Birlstone, a "cluster of half-timbered cottages on the northern border of the county of Sussex," ten or twelve miles from Tunbridge Wells.<sup>1</sup> The house was said to date from the fifth year of James I (1608-09),<sup>2</sup> and to have arisen upon the ruins of a feudal castle which had been destroyed by fire in the year 1543. The castle had been guarded by two moats; but the outer moat had been allowed to dry up, and was used as a kitchen-garden, while the inner, forty feet in breadth, was still in use, fed by a small stream, which prevented its becoming unhealthy.<sup>3</sup> The tenants at the time of our story had repaired the drawbridge, and caused it to be raised every night. On the ground floor, immediately to the right of the bridge, was the room in which the body was found.<sup>4</sup>

From the foregoing summary it is evident that Birlstone Manor must be sought for on or near the road connecting Tunbridge Wells, in Kent, with East Grinstead, in Sussex; and it is a fact that until some years ago there existed a house near Forest Row which fulfilled all the requirements of the story.

Forest Row lies twelve miles and six furlongs from Tun-

<sup>1</sup> *The Valley of Fear*, 915.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, 948.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, 916.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.*, 925.



### *The Baker Street Scene*

bridge Wells.<sup>5</sup> Half a mile to the west are the remains of Brambletye House and Brambletye Manor. The latter building, which was abandoned after the erection of the much larger Brambletye House, in about 1631,<sup>6</sup> was re-occupied before the end of the seventeenth century, when the newer and far more pretentious mansion was allowed to go to ruin. In 1826 the two houses are thus described:

"This massive structure [i.e., *Brambletye House*] is now a mass of ivy-covered ruins, though two centuries have not elapsed since its first stone was laid; while the venerable moated house in its vicinity remains in probably little worse condition than when it was deserted."<sup>7</sup>

It is fortunate that two illustrations of the old Manor House are available. An etching, dated 1809, of the "Moated House at Brambletye,"<sup>8</sup> shows that by the beginning of the nineteenth century the drawbridge had been abolished, and replaced by a permanent construction in masonry. However, by 1827, at the latest, the original arrangement had been restored; for it is written in *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*<sup>9</sup> that

"It will be seen [i.e., from the accompanying woodcut]<sup>10</sup> that the moated house was furnished with a ponderous drawbridge and other fortifying resources."

This drawbridge, which undoubtedly decided Douglas in his selection of the place, was after his death once more replaced by a bridge of stone, for the *Sussex Map*<sup>11</sup> shows it

<sup>5</sup> *Cary's Traveller's Companion*, 1828, col. 950.

<sup>6</sup> T. W. Horsefield: *The History, Antiquities, and Topography of the County of Sussex*, 1835, I, p. 389.

<sup>7</sup> Horace Smith: *Brambletye House*, I., p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Amsinck: *Tunbridge Wells and Its Neighbourhood*, 1810, p. 180.

<sup>9</sup> 20 Oct., 1827, vol. x., p. 267.

<sup>10</sup> *Ib.*, p. 265.

<sup>11</sup> *Sussex [East]* v. 14 (1931).



clearly marked. It is, in fact, all that now remains of the building.

In still another respect the crude woodcut of 1827 conforms more closely to the narrative than the etching of 1809 in showing windows on the ground-floor to the right of the entrance, though the woodcutter has placed the opening too high. The moat is approximately forty feet wide, as Watson describes it, and it is not more than twenty yards distant from the Medway, which keeps it from becoming stagnant and unhealthy.

One cannot but regret the destruction of this ancient house. The loss of the hide-hole, where Charles II is said to have taken refuge for several days during the Civil War, is deplorable, for it was of the unusual ground-floor type, of which relatively few examples remain.<sup>12</sup>

The only really puzzling feature of the narrative is the reference to Hugh de Capus, reputed builder of the original castle in the reign of William Rufus. The name seems not to have existed in England, or, indeed anywhere nearer than the province of Carniola in the present kingdom of Yugoslavia. The "ramping lion" on the ancient stone pillars at the entrance to the drive, which Watson attributes to "Capus of Birlstone," was actually the crest of the last known occupant of the long-since-ruined Bramblētye House, Sir James Richards, Bart., in the reign of Charles II.

NOTE. A certain Conan Doyle, who is supposed to have been Watson's literary agent, lived for some years in the neighbourhood of Forest Row.

<sup>12</sup> Granville Squiers: *Secret Hiding-Places*, 1933, *passim*.



221*B*

BY VINCENT STARRETT

---

Here dwell together still two men of note  
Who never lived and so can never die:  
How very near they seem, yet how remote  
That age before the world went all awry.  
But still the game's afoot for those with ears  
Attuned to catch the distant view-halloo:  
England is England yet, for all our fears—  
Only those things the heart believes are true.

A yellow fog swirls past the window-pane  
As night descends upon this fabled street:  
A lonely hansom splashes through the rain,  
The ghostly gas lamps fail at twenty feet.  
Here, though the world explode, these two survive,  
And it is always eighteen ninety-five.



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# THE BAKER STREET IRREGULARS

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*No Sherlockian anthology would be complete unless it contained at least an adumbration of the inner mysteries of the Baker Street Irregulars, that esoteric organization dedicated openly and ostensibly to the single purpose of nourishing and keeping green the memory of Sherlock Holmes. The deeper intentions of the Irregulars are most clearly suggested, perhaps, in their Constitution and Buy-Laws, which were written by the noted authority Mr Elmer Davis on a pattern frankly borrowed, he acknowledges, from the forms established by the Friendly Sons of St Vitus. With the gracious permission of all concerned, the Constitution and Buy-Laws of the B.S.I. are hereby reproduced and made public.*



# *Constitution and By-Laws of the Baker Street Irregulars*

## ARTICLE I

The name of this society shall be the Baker Street Irregulars.

## ARTICLE II

Its purpose shall be the study of the Sacred Writings.

## ARTICLE III

All persons shall be eligible for membership who pass an examination in the Sacred Writings set by officers of the society, and who are considered otherwise suitable.

## ARTICLE IV

The officers shall be: a Gasogene, a Tantalus, and a Commissionaire.

The duties of the Gasogene shall be those commonly performed by a President.

The duties of the Tantalus shall be those commonly performed by a Secretary.

The duties of the Commissionaire shall be to telephone down for ice, White Rock, and whatever else may be required and available; to conduct all negotiations with waiters; and to assess the members pro rata for the cost of same.



## BUY-LAWS

(1) An annual meeting shall be held on January 6th, or thereabouts, at which the Conanical toasts shall be drunk;<sup>1</sup> after which the members shall drink at will.

(2) The current round shall be bought by any member who fails to identify, by title of story and context, any quotation from the Sacred Writings submitted by any other member.

*Qualification A.*—If two or more members fail so to identify, a round shall be bought by each of those so failing.

*Qualification B.*—If the submitter of the quotation, upon challenge, fails to identify it correctly, he shall buy the round.

(3) Special meetings may be called at any time or any place by any one of three members, two of whom shall constitute a quorum.

*Qualification A.*—If said two are of opposite sexes, they shall use care in selecting the place of meeting, to avoid misinterpretation (or interpretation either, for that matter).

*Qualification B.*—If such two persons of opposite sexes be clients of the Personal Column of *The Saturday Review of Literature* the foregoing does not apply; such persons being presumed to let their consciences be their guides.

(4) All other business shall be left for the monthly meeting.

(5) There shall be no monthly meeting.

<sup>1</sup> (1) To "*The Woman*," (2) to "*Mrs Hudson*," (3) to "*Mycroft*," and (4) to "*Dr Watson's Second Wife*."



## *The Baker Street Irregulars*

BY ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

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*A further suggestion of Irregular goings-on, with due and proper regard for the arcana, is offered in this vignette by one who was a party to the original conspiracy, and whose memory is revered by the membership today as fondly and as warmly as his presence was hailed that night in far-off 1934 when Sherlock Holmes—alias Alexander Woollcott—strode into Christ Cella's private dining room complete with cloak and deer-stalker.*

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TO F. YEATS-BROWN, the old Bengal Lancer, we are all indebted for some knowledge of how, in April five-and-thirty years ago, Abdul-Hamid the Damned spent his last night as Caliph of Islam. Lord, as he liked to put it, of Two Continents and Two Oceans, he whom Gladstone had dubbed the Great Assassin knew on that night that already the obstreperous Young Turks, twenty thousand strong, were starting toward him from Salonika. He could only issue a statement breathing his somewhat belated passion for constitutional government and then await another daylight. This was no easy prospect, for his own unrest infected the entire palace. The pigeons in the imperial dove-cotes, numerous as the Young Turks, were all a-twitter. The parakeets were on edge. Even the zebras seemed to know the jig was up. Though he bathed daily in milk and



## *The Baker Street Irregulars*

never forgot to rouge his saffron cheeks, Abdul-Hamid looked all of his sixty-six years. His concubines, of whom in that house of a thousand divans he had, through the force of tradition, acquired rather more than he any longer remembered what to do with, were themselves having the vapors. And anyway, if he must somehow while away the time until dawn, he would need a more potent anodyne. Happily this was provided by the linguists at the press bureau, for in the nick of time there came dawdling into Constantinople from London a recent issue of the *Strand Magazine*, and they all worked like beavers on a translation from its pages. I suspect it was the issue distinguished in the minds of collectors by the first publication of the magnificent story called "The Bruce-Partington Plans." Thus it befell that the Great Assassin spent his last night as Sultan sitting with a shawl pulled over his poor old knees while his Chamberlain deferentially read aloud to him the newest story about Sherlock Holmes.

Wherefore, I think it may well be that his perturbed spirit hovered over a coffeehouse in the Fatuous Forties when, on a gusty night not long before Christmas, there met there and dined together certain raffish fellows having this in common with Abdul the Damned, that they were all brothers in the Baker Street Irregulars. Topped for the occasion with a plaid hunting cap, your conscientious correspondent repaired to the secret assemblage in one of our town's few surviving hansoms, jogging along, through the best New York could do in the way of a dun-colored fog, with the disquieting notion that he was being followed. This baseless apprehension was born of a letter from a medico in Kansas City, warning me that my hansom would be trailed through the night by a heavily veiled lady in a four-wheeler.

But if Dr Clendening failed to arrive, heavily veiled or otherwise, the faithful were out in full force. Trampling



### *The Baker Street Irregulars*

down a negligible opposition, Christopher Morley was elected Gasogene and the post of Tantalus went to that strangely literate Harvard man, Earle Walbridge.<sup>1</sup> Elmer Davis firmly read aloud what is known, I believe, as "a paper," to the visible edification of Gene Tunney, who was making what I feel sure was his first appearance as an Irregular. But the dinner turned from a mere befuddled hope into a great occasion at that precise moment when, after a slight commotion in the wings caused by all the waiters trying at once to help him out of his wraprascal, there entered—vague, abstracted, changeless, and inexpressibly charming—an enchanting blend of slinking gazelle and Roman Senator, William Gillette, as ever was. At the sight of this, his most famous model, Frederic Dorr Steele wept softly into his soufflé and none of us, I think, remained unmoved.

Dear me suzz, it must have been toward the close of the nineties that the ineluctable gadfly, Charles Frohman, goaded Mr Gillette into making a play out of Dr Doyle's already famous stories, which the actor himself had not, up to that time, had a chance to examine. Therefore, he was obliged to devote all of three weeks to the task of turning them into a play. This much of that play's history may have accounted for the slightly guilty look with which he listened the other night while Vincent Starrett rose to argue, from indices furnished by the ash of a Trichinopoly cigar and certain allusions in the record of the Gloria Scott case, that, wherever Mycroft Holmes may have gone to school, Sherlock had surely studied at Cambridge rather than at Oxford. Suspecting me, with unerring justice, of an ignorance as profound as his own in these Baker Street niceties, Mr Gillette confided to my delightful ear the story of the tramp who, a-prowl in the Louvre, was terrified by

<sup>1</sup>In point of fact, Walbridge was graduated from the University of Vermont in 1917 with the degree of Ph.B.



*The Baker Street Irregulars*

the sight of that lovely mutilée, the Venus of Milo. "Let's get out of here," the tramp whispered hoarsely to his companion, "or they'll say we did it."

In addition to Dr Clendening's, and, of course, that of Abdul the Damned, there was another vacant chair which troubled me. I could have wished that Mr Gillette might have brought with him and read aloud to us an unpublished piece of his called "The Painful Predicament of Sherlock Holmes," a one-act sketch which he first played at a benefit here and later put on at the Duke of York's in London as a curtain-raiser for his own "Clarice." This sketch made much of Billy, the buttons at Mrs Hudson's, who is best remembered because he had the curtain in the second act of the longer play. Surely you remember how the minions of Professor Moriarty tried to capture Billy and how, with his uniform torn to shreds, he escaped their dastardly clutches. Can't you still hear him clattering up the Baker Street stairs and see the toothsome grin with which he assented heartily when Sherlock Holmes, in one of his rare expansive moments, announced, as the curtain fell, that he was a good boy? Casting about him for a cockney boy who might act this part at the Duke of York's, Mr Gillette settled upon a little, frightened underfed sixteen-year-old comedian who had been playing the part in a provincial touring company, and who had gone big, they said, in Doncaster.

I kept thinking the other night that it might have been possible to have had him with us. At least he was in this country at the time. He has done well here. His name is Charles Spencer Chaplin.



## *An Unrecorded Incident*

ANON

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*Although the actual proceedings of the Baker Street Irregulars are never given to the lay eye to see, the incident recorded below took place before the gathering to which it refers had entered its plenary session, and hence may be revealed without violation of ritual or sensibility. The account is extracted from a letter written by one of the members present to another member, who had been detained in a distant city.*

---

SINCE WRITING YOU last week, I have thought of an episode that occurred on the occasion of the recent B. S. I. dinner in New York, which I never told you about at the time and which may not otherwise have been reported to you. It deserves telling by such a pen as yours to do it justice, but I shall give you meanwhile the best eye-witness account I can.

It was at the Murray Hill Hotel, of course, which you know to be the closest thing to the London of the '80's and '90's that exists here or in London. Chris Morley, Bob Leavitt, P. M. Stone, and two or three others of the early-birds were standing outside parlors F and G on the street floor, where the libations would shortly begin to pour but where they had not yet; when down the long corridor coming toward us we saw a bent and hobbled figure—bent, literally, at a 90-degree angle from the hips, and hobbling



slowly and painfully behind an outstretched cane. Just discernible under the battered old hat was a haggard, bearded face, shadowed behind a pair of dark glasses.

We all saw him at once. Obviously, some member-wag putting on a crude and rather exaggerated stunt: for Neville St Clair in his most Boonish moments was never as halt as this; and the ejaculation "the creeping man!" that sprang to the lips of the less initiate, while appropriate as a descriptive, did not, as you and I know, serve to match the requirements of the canons.

The pitiful figure came closer and closer, as we watched with bated breath and knowing leers. Now it was full upon us, still bent and tortured, and pressing with unchanging pace through the little aisle we made as we drew back against either wall. Six minds (I think there were six of us), executing a Holmesian *tour-de-force*, conjured up the name of Henry Baker's *bête noire*; six hands were poised to do the logical and utterly-called-for thing as soon as two more steps should be taken along the way.

Then there would be the wild leap, and the shouts of laughter, and the casting away of glasses, beard and cane; and then much mutual back-slapping, and the libations would begin.

But something restrained us. My own arm was paralyzed at the elbow, and some equally psychic arrest must have operated on the others as well. The figure stumped on, still bent and crippled—on down the long corridor till it reached the turning at the end and disappeared from view.

We never saw the man again, of course. We found out later that he was a legitimate—*very* legitimate, if you ask me—resident of the hotel, suffering from some disease of the spine and hip-joints which made him walk as no man even out of Watson has ever walked before.

But what fate led him that night straight to a group of men who, above all others in the world, would be tempted



*An Unrecorded Incident*

to see him for something other than he really was? And what occult force held back those same men from doing, in the circumstances, what lusty, forthright men have always delighted in doing with far less provocation and far less perfection of physical opportunity, down through all the ages?

No—there was something there that night, in the aura of the emanations from Baker Street, that did not meet the eye.

Verily, there is something supernal about Sherlock Holmes!



## *The Road to Baker Street\**

BY HARVEY OFFICER

(with apologies to Rudyard Kipling)

1. In a restaurant in Holborn, where young Stamford ate  
his lunch,  
He revealed to Doctor Watson news that proved a lucky  
hunch,  
For he "did immortal service," whence his memory is  
bright,  
Introducing to the Doctor whom we honour here to-  
night.  
On the road to Baker Street,  
Where Lestrade and Gregson meet,  
Where the art of crime detection found its scientific feet,  
On the road to Baker Street,  
Where we sit at Sherlock's feet,  
And we read again the Canon with the stories all com-  
plete.
  
2. Now his eyes were sharp and piercing and his nose was  
long and thin,  
And his hands were stained with acids, square and  
prominent his chin,  
His tobacco in a slipper, in a scuttle his cigars,  
With a gasogene and tantalus not found in modern bars.

\* The anthem of the Baker Street Irregulars, sung antiphonally, to the tune of "The Road to Mandalay," at all gatherings.



*The Baker Street Irregulars*

We begin in Baker Street,  
On a day of wind and sleet,  
When the "tall, ascetic figure" once again we gladly  
meet,  
For "the game's afoot," he cries,  
From his bed must Watson rise,  
And they rattle in a hansom for adventurous emprise.

3. But when crime was on vacation and the thugs were  
lying low,  
In his armchair Sherlock fiddled, scraping chords with  
careless bow,  
Chords sonorous, chords fantastic, how he did it no one  
sees,  
For you cannot play such music with your fiddle on your  
knees.  
Had we been in Baker Street,  
Would those chords have sounded sweet?  
And would we with Doctor Watson have been patient  
and discreet?  
Ah, the years, how fast they fleet,  
Since those days in Baker Street,  
Let us hope that even Mendelssohn from him would be  
a treat.

4. Ship me off to Piccadilly, to a London Bobby's beat,  
Where a hansom-cab would take me to the shrine in  
Baker Street,  
For the bells of London call me, and it's there that I  
would be,  
Sitting in with Doctor Watson on a night-long story  
spree.  
O ye sons of Baker Street,  
As we sit at Sherlock's feet,



*The Road to Baker Street*

Be ye sure the land that knew him shall not ever know  
defeat,

For the men of England's fleet

Once again their foes will beat,

*Nor shall Axis armies ever tread the stones of Baker  
Street.*



## *L'Envoi*

---

*And so we come at last to say farewell to these immortal two.*

*As Vincent Starrett has so truly put in words the thoughts we feel:*

*" . . . they still live for all that love them well: in a romantic chamber of the heart: in a nostalgic country of the mind: where it is always 1895."*

*Ave atque vale, John!*

*Ave atque vale, Sherlock!*





## *A Sherlockian Bibliography*



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*Profile by Gaslight*

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All of these Writings—56 short stories and four long stories—are from the canonical pen of John H. Watson, M.D., with the exception of two short stories in the *Case Book* ("The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier" and "The Adventure of the Lion's Mane") which were written by Sherlock Holmes himself; another short story in the *Case Book* ("The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone") which is of doubtful authorship; and a short story in *His Last Bow* ("His Last Bow") which is attributed to Mycroft Holmes.

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*Profile by Gaslight*

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A Baker Street Song Book; by Harvey Officer; The Pamphlet House, Maplewood, N. J., 1943. Thirteen *Lieder* (with words) about the Baker Street scene; together with the Baker Street Suite for Violin and Piano, in five movements.

There are, in addition to these books devoted wholly to the Sherlockian lore, some dozens of critical essays on the Baker Street scene contained in miscellaneous anthologies, collected essays, and books dealing with criminology and detection. In addition, innumerable essays and other contributions to the corpus of learning have been published under private cover, or have appeared in the newspapers and magazines over the years, in a form not readily accessible to the general reader.



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Heywood Broun's "Sherlock Holmes and the Pygmies" in *The Woman's Home Companion*, for November, 1930.

Howard Collins' "Ex Libris Sherlock Holmes" in *The Saturday Review of Literature* for January 3, 1942.

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